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The House of Yeats

RUSSELL FRASER:
Rationalism and the Discursive Style

BENJAMIN DE MOTT:
An Eye on the Weather—a story

LYSANDER KEMP:
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ROBIN MAGOWAN:
Persian Notes

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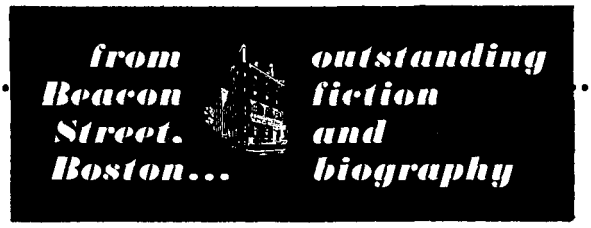

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Notes on Contributors

B. L. REID, Professor of English at Mount Holyoke, has published books on Gertrude Stein and Yeats, and is at work on a biography of John Quinn.

LYSANDER KEMP is an American poet who has lived for the past several years in Mexico. Of CARLOS PELLICER he writes: "The dean of Mexican poets was born in Villahermosa, Tabasco, in 1899. His poem on Bolivar reflects his extensive travels throughout Latin America."

The following contributors are appearing for the first time in THE HUDSON REVIEW:

DENNIS SCHMITZ is in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin, and working on two novels.

RUSSELL FRASER has just been appointed Chairman of the English Department at Vanderbilt University. He has published several books on Renaissance poetry and is now working on a new one.

ADRIENNE RICH'S most recent book is *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law.*

ANTHONY OSTROFF is a poet and novelist who is now teaching at the University of California, Berkeley.

STEWART L. UDALL, Secretary of the Interior, is the author of *The Quiet Crisis.* His poem in this issue, his first to be published, had its origin in the visit he made to the Soviet Union with Robert Frost in 1962.

CHARLES HIGHAM is a poet and critic, who lives in Sydney, Australia. He is at present at work on a book on film directors.

ROBIN MAGOWAN teaches English at the University of Washington; he has published a number of critical essays on 19th century pastoral.

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ, a Pulitzer Fellow in Critical Writing at Columbia, has edited a collection of stories of the 1960's, *The Evolving Form,* to be published by Avon.

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN is a poet and critic who has been teaching at the College of the Virgin Islands.

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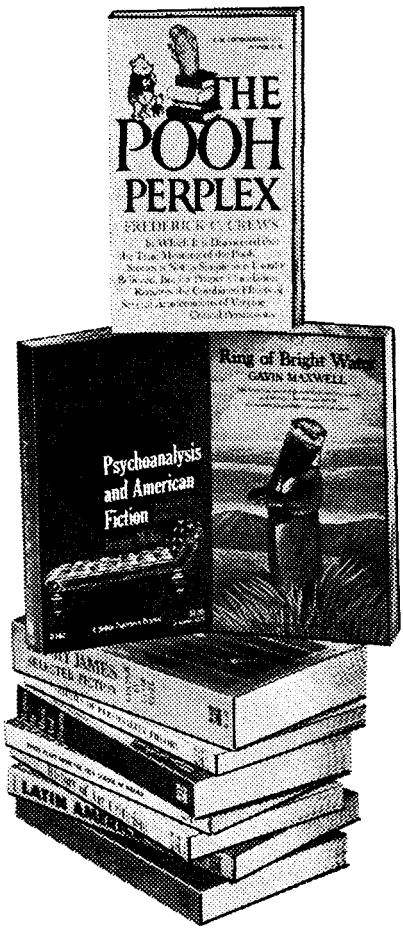

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B. L. REID

The House of Yeats

WE ARE RIGHT TO HONOR YEATS AT ANY TIME, and more especially at the centennial of his birth, even though we can never hope to honor him as he has honored us. It is now perfectly clear that Yeats is a classic, a man for all seasons, one of the great poets. T. S. Eliot described him generously but not extravagantly when he called him "the greatest poet of our time—certainly the greatest in this language, and so far as I am able to judge, in any language." Yeats may also have been a great man, though that is a harder judgment to make, and is perhaps not our business.

I wish to praise the poet under the title of 'The House of Yeats.' Under that roof, or umbrella, I am thinking of the house as the family, in the Greek sense, 'the house of Atreus,' for example, which bore the famous curse; also of Yeats's own deep familial or dynastic sense of himself and his origins; also of his feudal, courtly, aristocratic leanings, which need to be defined and qualified; finally of actual houses which in the course of his life accommodated him with an air of purpose and symbolism. I find my most inclusive text in a remark of Frank O'Connor's: ". . . he was the most consistently noble man I have ever met." It is the nobility of Yeats, in its ramified and often surprising forms, that I wish to try to identify.

Confident as he was of his own creative gifts, Yeats never supposed that he had made himself; to be "self-born" (in his own phrase) was the privilege of gods or demons. Yeats was a Yeats, which is to say a union of Yeats and Pollexfen. It was his father who spoke what the poet called "the only eulogy that ever turned my head," as follows: " '. . . by marriage with a Pollexfen we have given a tongue to the sea cliffs.' " There is a great deal of Yeats in that statement, and in his pride in it. By 'we' the father means we Yeatses and I John Butler Yeats. The tongue is the poet-son whom he loved and admired (and instructed). The sea cliffs are the tough tongue-tied Cornish Pollexfens. What most moves the son in the eulogy is to be declared the voice of the noble vision, of the world seen as high, deep, and hard, to be that sternness softened to the point of speech.

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In seeking to understand the meaning of nobility in the life and work of Yeats, I shall glance quickly at a good many passages in his poetry and prose, and longer at four major poems: first that which Eliot called "the violent and terrible epistle dedicatory" to his volume of 1914, *Responsibilities;* then the title poem from *The Tower* of 1928; then two of the great *Last Poems* of 1939, "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" and "High Talk."

First the "Introductory Rhymes" of 1914:

> Pardon, old fathers, if you still remain
> Somewhere in ear-shot for the story's end,
> Old Dublin merchant 'free of ten and four'
> Or trading out of Galway into Spain;
> Old country scholar, Robert Emmet's friend,
> A hundred-year-old memory to the poor;
> Merchant and scholar who have left me blood
> That has not passed through any huckster's loin,
> Soldiers that gave, whatever die was cast:
> A Butler or an Armstrong that withstood
> Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne
> James and his Irish when the Dutchman crossed;
> Old merchant skipper that leaped overboard
> After a ragged hat in Biscay Bay;
> You most of all, silent and fierce old man,
> Because the daily spectacle that stirred
> My fancy, and set my boyish lips to say,
> 'Only the wasteful virtues earn the sun';
> Pardon that for a barren passion's sake,
> Although I have come close on forty-nine,
> I have no child, I have nothing but a book,
> Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine.

How much Yeats is there. Periodically, throughout his life, Yeats felt compelled to write what I think of as roll-calling poems, poems of accountancy and summation, in which persons and motives were commanded to stand forth and shape up, to express and to embody the current, and collective, state of his mind and heart. This is such a poem. W. H. Auden has praised Yeats as the poet who brought back to life in English the occasional poem, verses that celebrate notable events. Auden was thinking of po-

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ems like "Easter 1916" or "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory," which are also roll-calling poems in my sense.

But these "Introductory Rhymes" are not quite the kind of thing Auden had in mind. Here the only occasion is personal and small, the publication of a new volume of poems and the poet's arrival at a certain age. Yet Yeats characteristically chooses to make ceremony of these small events. As he writes the poem in January of 1914, he is forty-eight years old; but he does not say "forty-eight," he says "close on forty-nine." What he is thinking of is "fifty," the half-century, a small-scale *magnus annus*. For a man of Yeats's passionate and committed humanism, every event, because it is life and is human, is potentially symbolic and entitled to celebration. His sense of life was like Keats's, who spoke of "a life like the Scriptures, figurative," and guessed that Shakespeare "led a life of allegory" upon which his works were a "commentary." That sort of view of experience as allegory, rising out of myth and pointing back to it, was Yeats's view of his own life, indeed of all life.

Here, calling the roll at close on forty-nine, casting up a balance, Yeats is looking at his life as figurative, a metaphor full of meaning. It scarcely matters, or matters positively, that the event he is celebrating is negative, a non-event; the thing that is occurring is a non-occurrence. What he is celebrating is his own failure to create and transmit life: "I have no child, I have nothing but a book." The poem is a public and passionate *apologia pro vita sua,* asking pardon of the ranked shades of his ancestors, "Pardon, old fathers," for his failure as a man and as a Yeats. At the same time the poem is a form of prayer. Characteristically, the gods who are supplicated are secular and familial, "Pardon, old fathers." As a child, Yeats tells us in his *Autobiography,* he had confused one of these household gods, the "silent and fierce old man," his grandfather William Pollexfen, with the great God himself.

What is it in his ancestors that stirs and shames the poet, as nearing fifty he draws up for "the story's end"? It is the vivid habits and powers he means by "the wasteful virtues." Roughly, he is claiming for his paternal line the wasteful virtues of learning, charity, bravery, patriotism; for his maternal line he claims enterprise and daring, habitual passionate vitality. It is a pat-

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tern loosely aristocratic, at least one form of nobility. The mercantile blood is not denied but it is sublimated, it "has not passed through any huckster's loin." In his view of them Yeats's mercantile ancestors were not shopkeepers; they would not (in Moll Flanders's phrases) have shown the mark of their hats upon their wigs, or the mark of their apron-strings upon their coats. They were shipmen and sailors, merchant-adventurers. William Pollexfen bears the scar of a whaling hook in his hand, he hunts down enemies with a horsewhip, and displays in his little back parlor a painted coat of arms. When George Pollexfen rides to the race meeting at Sligo he is accompanied by two postilions in green livery.

The pattern is as well significantly Anglo-Irish, a strain after many generations in the land still not native or assimilated, still a bit alien and *rentier*. To be Anglo-Irish was to inherit a tradition of power and privilege, of landed gentility, of comparative wealth and culture, of Protestantism, of suspicious identification with the most hated of absentee proprietors, England herself. It was also to inherit the glory, though not necessarily the genius, of the most astonishingly brilliant and fertile strain in the history of British letters, the Anglo-Irish line which produced Congreve, Swift, Berkeley, Burke, Goldsmith, Sterne, Shaw, Wilde, Synge, Lady Gregory, Joyce Cary, and all the Yeatses.

The *grand seigneur* side of Yeats lasted all his life and if anything it intensified with time. It is the hardest side of him to like, at least for an American taste, which finds something repugnant and stagey in his tendency to love a lord, to admire power and privilege and to adopt its magisterial manners. The elegance of his own genetic line was running thin by the time it reached his father's generation, and Yeats was perfectly capable of seeing as comedy the eccentricity of the older ones about him—of one grandfather who slept with a hatchet against burglars, of another who walked about jingling his keys so as not to surprise his servants in embarrassing attitudes, of the vain Protestant curate who ripped three pairs of skintight trousers before he could mount one horse: " 'I had hoped for a curate,' " his rector said, " 'but they have sent me a jockey.' "

Certainly John Butler Yeats's family could have had no illusions of wealth or stability. Their life was shabby and peri-

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patetic, though never dull. J. B. Yeats was an admirable father and a gay and noble companion but a bad provider, and for many years everything anybody earned went perforce into what was called the family "'swalley hole.'" Yeats speaks laconically of the "torn tackle" of his equipment, of inking his socks to hide the holes. For years, apparently, he was actually undernourished; by housing and feeding him in summers at Coole Lady Gregory almost certainly extended his life. In view of these surrounding facts of his life, it is tempting to see Yeats's aristocratic leanings as wish-fulfilling and compensatory. One may be reminded of his own view of Keats in "Ego Dominus Tuus" where *Ille,* who speaks for Yeats, says:

> His art is happy, but who knows his mind?
> I see a schoolboy when I think of him,
> With face and nose pressed to a sweet-shop window,
> For certainly he sank into his grave
> His senses and his heart unsatisfied,
> And made—being poor, ailing and ignorant,
> Shut out from all the luxury of the world,
> The coarse-bred son of a livery-stable keeper—
> Luxuriant song.

But Yeats's aristocracy, in this limited and conventional sense, was real and a thing of blood. As a young man he was poor and ailing and even ignorant; but he could never have been called coarse-bred. Yet all this is only a small and distracting part of what I mean by the nobility of Yeats, or of his own definition of nobility. The true nobility visible in the "Introductory Rhymes" is less a matter of wealth or breeding than a matter of spirit, a matter of feeling, a matter of noble passion. The wasteful virtues are deeds and feelings of passion and commitment, hot, unthinking and unselfish, generous. They have to do with blood only in the degree to which old blood is likely to be hot blood. The silent and fierce old man whom as a boy Yeats confused with God, as a man he identified with King Lear and thus with the order of wasteful virtues that informs high tragedy. "Even today," he writes in *Reveries,* "when I read *King Lear* his image is always before me and I often wonder if the delight in passionate men in my plays and in my poetry is more than his memory." Looking

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through the family miniatures collected by his sister Lily, who was the squirrel of the Yeats family, he reflected, ". . . I am delighted with all that joins my life to those who had power in Ireland or with those anywhere that were good servants and poor bargainers. . . ." To practise the wasteful virtues the thing most necessary is to possess passion and generosity, to be a good servant and a poor bargainer.

It is clear too that the emotion that ultimately drives this poem, the poet's hopeless and unreconciled love for Maud Gonne, though it is bitterly described as "a barren passion," is of the order of nobility. Yeats's wasteful passion, good service and a poor bargain, summons all the ramified nobility of the poem. Maud was his Phoenix, his Helen, his daughter of the swan, his Pallas Athene, his woman Homer sung. To be so is to be noble, and to feel so of a noble person is to join the line of nobility. Such wasteful virtues earn the sun by kinship to it, being luminous and fiery, sprung from what Yeats would later call the resinous heart.

By the time of "The Tower," Yeats's roll-calling poem of 1926, his life was much altered, grander and more stable, in an Ireland detached from England and dismembered in herself, trying to become a modern state though barely alive after a world war, a revolution, and a civil war. Ten years before he had been confident and secure enough to refuse a knighthood, quietly. ". . . I do not wish anyone to say of me, 'only for a ribbon he left us.' " Yeats in 1926 was a senator of the Irish Free State, an internationally famous man of letters, a Nobel prizewinner who had been told that the Swedish royal family preferred him to any other recipient of the prize because he had the manners of a courtier. His inward elegance had moved outward and confirmed itself in that graceful and imposing presence that marked his deportment until the end of his life. And for the first time he knew something like affluence.

His sisters, influenced by the ideals of archaism and craftsmanship of William Morris, as was the poet who called Morris "my chief of men," had prospered modestly in their Cuala Industries, composed of Lily's fine needlework and embroidery and Lolly's fine printing and illumination. Yeats spoke of the traditionary feeling that had quickly attached itself to the little Cuala volumes: "My sister's books are like an old family magazine. A few hundred people buy them all and expect a common theme. Only once did

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I put a book into the series that was not Irish—Ezra's Noh plays —and I had to write a long introduction to annex Japan to Ireland." Jack Yeats was becoming Ireland's best known modern painter, his work given mass and energy by his sympathy with the open-air life of Ireland, with fist-fighters and horsemen and seamen and the rambling tinkers of the roads. The poet kept finding in his brother's pictures faces he remembered from their boyhood on the Sligo quays fifty years before.

Old John Butler Yeats had come to be known in the family as their Pilgrim Father. He went to New York for a visit in 1908, liked it, and stayed on to try out a new incarnation. He had been called the best talker in Dublin, and he was soon known as the best talker in New York, where the competition was less severe. He kept ramshackle *salon* for a circle of writers and painters at his French boarding house on West 29th Street. John Sloan has painted him there in "Yeats at Petitpas'," talking away to a little crowd about a dinner table in the back garden, in an attitude that recalls his son's image of him in a late poem, "his beautiful mischievous head thrown back." Ezra Pound recalled seeing "the father of all the Yeatsssss" about 1910 riding an elephant at Coney Island. The new career of the old portrait painter was little more successful than the old. He wrote and lectured and painted, energetically and happily, but he never quite paid his way. He still suffered from his old incapacity to finish crucial pictures. He worked on a self-portrait at John Quinn's commission for ten years, and left it unfinished when he died, the paint by then a half-inch thick. His many letters to his children were vivid and homely documents, intensely human and intelligent; those to the poet particularly composing a piecemeal aesthetics and philosophy warm, original, and profound. W. B. Yeats was quite aware of his deep debt to his father's mind. Composing a lecture in 1910 he found himself working toward a thought which he recognized as his father's, and he reflected how often that had happened. "It made me realize with some surprise," he wrote, "how fully my philosophy of life has been inherited from you in all but its details and applications." Importuned many times to come home to Ireland, J. B. Yeats temporized and delayed, and finally died in New York in 1922 at the age of eighty-two. The son wrote soon after to Olivia Shakespear, "I find it hard to realize my father's

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death, he has so long been a mind to me, that mind seems to me still thinking and writing."

Meanwhile, still unwilling to substitute the book for the child, Yeats was seeking a wife and a home, a setting for a wife and child. Maud Gonne still refused him, and he turned to her beautiful young daughter Iseult, who also refused. Yeats then turned to Georgiana Hyde-Lees, a young woman half his age whom he had known for several years. She accepted and married him in 1917, and thenceforward she was his beloved George. It was a happy and fruitful marriage. "My wife is a perfect wife," Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory in December of 1917, "kind, wise, and unselfish. I think you were such another young girl once. She has made my life serene and full of order." In a few years George brought him a daughter, Anne, and a son, Michael. She brought him also, through her mediumship, through the "unknown instructors," those "reed-throated whisperers," the means to that ordering of his thought which became *A Vision*.

The physical house of Yeats had changed over these years in what now seems a pattern, and one purposeful and appropriate. His last close link with Sligo had been cut with the death in 1910 of his beloved uncle George Pollexfen, businessman, horseman, and astrologer. Lily, who had been in attendance, reported that the banshee had cried on the night before he died, and Yeats was comforted. Yeats had left the family home in Bedford Park in London for the apartment in Woburn Buildings which connected by a passage with the rooms of Arthur Symons. At several intervals he shared a cottage in Sussex with the brash young American Ezra Pound, who taught him to fence, and to admire "certain noble plays of Japan," the Noh plays, as expressions of an exotic aristocracy, models of brevity and astringency and symbolism, of blood-nobility, an art so simply noble that by it he thought he might at last escape all the paraphernalia of the commercial theatre, the claims of audience. He wrote to John Quinn, "I had thought to escape the press, and people digesting their dinners, and to write for my friends." Such plays he considered might be played in a drawing room or a barn. Those alternatives, the equality of the drawing room and the barn, suggest what nobility was coming to mean for Yeats. After his marriage there were long intervals at Oxford, where Yeats worked in the Bodleian Library, finding it the

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finest of all houses for the mind, "the most comfortable and friendly library in the world and I suppose the most beautiful." But George was equally horrified, he reported, by the hats and the minds of the dons' wives. Summer after summer, before the marriage, there had been Lady Gregory's modest great house at Coole Park, in some ways the truest of all Yeats's spiritual homes. For him it was the synthesis of the best of Anglo-Ireland, where the widowed great Lady who had made herself in middle age an artist and folklorist, heiress of a long line of blood and wealth and power, herself at once lonely, grand, and simple, attuned to any company in castle and cottage, presided over assorted spartan feasts of the spirit. His debt to her was incalculable, as he knew, and as he frequently and handsomely acknowledged.

Now, after 1916, there was the tower itself, literal and figurative, which gave the title to this poem and this volume. As always in Yeats's life, fact moved toward myth and symbol, and the tower invests his imagery for his last twenty years in a variety of attitudes, solemn or gay or mocking. Yeats acquired the tower for £35. The property consisted of an acre or so of land in the rolling countryside a few miles from Gort, from Coole Park, and from the sea, with a Norman stone tower and attached cottages, the whole half-ruinous. It is important to form an image of the parts and the whole, for all came together to form the emblem. The place is isolated in the countryside, set in the ell formed by a shallow little river flowing past one side and a narrow country road flowing over a stone bridge on another side. Thus it is of the land, of the water, of the road, and in its isolated verticality, of the sky. It is deep in Ireland and deep in time, the main structure dating back to feudal times. The immensely thick grey stone walls, pierced by slit windows, rise to form four stories and a battlement. Each story is a single huge square room, and the narrow winding stair of rough worn stone rises past each story to the roof. Yeats called the tower Thoor Ballylee, and he explained his logic in a letter to Olivia Shakespear: "Thoor is Irish for tower and it will keep people from suspecting us of modern gothic and a deer park. I think the harsh sound of 'Thoor' amends the softness of the rest."

Like the equation of drawing room and barn, that union of harsh and soft is what I want to get at, for it helps to explain the fluent functions of the symbol for Yeats. "My idea is to keep the

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contrast between the medieval castle and the peasant's cottage," he wrote. His nobility required both forms of life. "We shall live on the road like a country man, our white walled cottage with its border of flowers like any country cottage and then the gaunt castle," he said in a letter to Clement Shorter. To John Quinn he wrote of the tower in a vein of gay self-satire, "I am making a setting for my old age, a place to influence lawless youth, with its severity and antiquity." It occurred to him that had he possessed his tower earlier he might have been able to smooth Joyce's lawless and difficult way.

Yeats took the keenest pleasure in assuring the primitive integrity of the reconstruction and furnishing of the castle and the cottage. Local artisans, carpenters, masons, smiths, were to do all the work, overseen by a local builder named Raftery, an emotional man who wept when things went wrong. Massive handmade tables, chairs, and beds were designed by Scott, whom Yeats usually referred to as a "drunken man of genius." Because building materials could not be had in war time, Yeats triumphantly bought the wreckage of an old mill, "great beams and three-inch planks, and old paving stones." And finally he composed one of his brutal short lyrics, "To Be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee," as his own part in the country artisanship.

> I, the poet William Yeats,
> With old mill boards and sea-green slates,
> And smithy work from the Gort forge,
> Restored this tower for my wife George;
> And may these characters remain
> When all is ruin once again.

He had bought the house, as he put it in "Meditations in Time of Civil War," "For an old neighbour's friendship," "And decked and altered it for a girl's love." For this, in its gracefully ponderous way, was also a honeymoon cottage: "Beauty and fool together laid," as he was to put it later. And that conjunction, too, suggests the poles of Yeats's nobility.

It is the conjunction I wish to speak of in the poem, the seemingly disjunct series of images and ideas that come in train to the poet's mind as he paces upon the battlements of the tower to "send imagination forth/ Under the day's declining beam, and

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call/ Images and memories/ From ruin or from ancient trees. . . ." First he recalls an elegant Mrs. French, cruelly lofty:

> Beyond that ridge lived Mrs. French, and once
> When every silver candlestick or sconce
> Lit up the dark mahogany and the wine,
> A serving-man, that could divine
> That most respected lady's every wish,
> Ran and with the garden shears
> Clipped an insolent farmer's ears
> And brought them in a little covered dish.

Immediately, without hesitation, the mind moves to a nameless peasant girl, celebrated for her beauty by a blind folk poet, and the men maddened by poetry and wine and love who set out to find her by moonlight, "And one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone." He pauses to reflect on the phenomenon of a blind poet admiring a girl's beauty, but leaps at once to the oneness and inextricability of human passion:

> Strange, but the man who made the song was blind;
> Yet, now I have considered it, I find
> That nothing strange; the tragedy began
> With Homer that was a blind man,
> And Helen has all living hearts betrayed.

And he recalls that he himself had behaved as oddly as the blind poet Raftery, in creating Hanrahan and sending him off to follow a hare and hounds made from a pack of cards, so that "He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro/ And had but broken knees for hire/ And horrible splendour of desire." The mind now swings home to the tower itself, the history or legend of its occupants: "an ancient bankrupt," harried to death, rough men-at-arms who "climbed the narrow stair" "cross-gartered to the knees/ Or shod in iron," or certain ghostly men-at-arms who interrupted sleepers with the noise of their great wooden dice.

It is a fantastic roll that Yeats is calling. Those who are summoned form a company in being ancient, local, and passionate, a nobility of fire and commitment, the kind of folk who might be hoped to have an answer to a certain disastrous question about to be asked by the present master of the house.

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As I would question all, come all who can;
Come old, necessitous, half-mounted man;
And bring beauty's blind rambling celebrant;
The red man the juggler sent
Through God-forsaken meadows; Mrs. French,
Gifted with so fine an ear;
The man drowned in a bog's mire,
When mocking Muses chose the country wench.

What Yeats at past sixty-one wants to know is whether all of them were tortured as he is by the passing of time and the losing of life:

Did all old men and women, rich and poor,
Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,
Whether in public or in secret rage
As I do now against old age?

But a noble old man of property ought to make a will, and that is what Yeats does in the long trimeter paragraphs that close out the poem. The property he bequeaths, however, is primarily spiritual, more ideal than real. Having prepared his peace with learning and poetry and love, "All those things whereof/ Man makes a superhuman/ Mirror-resembling dream," what he has left to bequeath are his pride and his faith. His pride is Irish but super-political, brave, free, generous, impassioned,

The pride of people that were
Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
Neither to slaves that were spat on,
Nor to the tyrants that spat,
The people of Burke and of Grattan
That gave, though free to refuse—
Pride, like that of the morn,
When the headlong light is loose,
Or that of the fabulous horn,
Or that of the sudden shower
When all streams are dry,
Or that of the hour
When the swan must fix his eye
Upon a fading gleam,
Float out upon a long

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Last reach of glimmering stream
And there sing his last song.

His faith is religious but unchristian, an assertion of the power of man's impassioned will to force upon life and death a sufficient shape and significance:

I mock Plotinus' thought
And cry in Plato's teeth,
Death and life were not
Till man made up the whole,
Made lock, stock and barrel
Out of his bitter soul,
Aye, sun and moon and star, all.
And further add to that
That, being dead, we rise,
Dream and so create
Translunar Paradise.

And who are Yeats's heirs? Ordinary noble men, young, active, self-defined, lonely integrities:

. . . upstanding men
That climb the streams until
The fountain leap, and at dawn
Drop their cast at the side
Of dripping stone. . . .

Like the tower itself, the poem is a ramshackle monolith, casually impregnable, held together, really, by the noble old energy of complex but purified passion.

"The Municipal Gallery Revisited" of Yeats's *Last Poems* is a roll-calling poem of a more specific and consistent kind. The poet must be seen as an old man communing alone with racial shades, "the images of thirty years," the ancestors of modern Ireland. It is the portraits that seize and hold him, significant countenances, dead but speaking. There are the patriots, political men, Casement, Griffith, O'Higgins. There is the face of a nameless woman, "Beautiful and gentle in her Venetian way," whom he remembers seeing "all but fifty years ago/ For twenty minutes in some studio." Thinking of time and passion and beauty and sacrifice, the old poet is invaded by a sudden unbidden wave of feeling,

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shaken to the point of tears: "Heart-smitten with emotion I sink down,/ My heart recovering with covered eyes." Touching in its privacy and impressive in its susceptibility, that vision surprises Yeats's noble nature in action for us, defined by the capacity to feel and to value noble bearing and noble work to the base of his being.

Yeats's eyes move next to images of the Coole Park line, Lady Gregory, her son Robert Gregory, her nephew Hugh Lane. All are dead in fact but live on in feeling in a way the canvas cannot contain: "But where is the brush that could show anything/ Of all that pride and that humility?" Yeats asks. Pride and humility: once again it is the fusion at the center of the nobility he loved, hymned, and embodied. All the Gregorys are gone and even the great house is gone where, as he puts it, "Honour had lived so long." But this mechanical passing he cannot mourn. The life of that house had a quality that lives on superior to the envy of time and of fresher, smaller motives. "No fox can foul the lair the badger swept."

That was, Yeats parenthesises, "An image out of Spenser and the common tongue." Once more it is the noble conjunction of the elegant, the ancient, the traditional, the common. Now Yeats collects the images of the trinity he wished might have stood together to receive the Nobel Prize, himself, John Synge, Lady Gregory, now forever united in his feeling in the common noble "dream of the noble and the beggar-man."

> John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought
> All that we did, all that we said or sang
> Must come from contact with the soil, from that
> Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.
> We three alone in modern times had brought
> Everything down to that sole test again,
> Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.

Yeats moves finally to Synge's own image, whom he describes only in the packed phrase, "that rooted man." "Think where man's glory most begins and ends," he invites us at the end of the poem, "And say my glory was I had such friends." Man's glory most begins and ends in high motives and high passions, rising out of the common life and wishing finally to speak only to that. In the spring of 1937 Yeats commended an essay on his work by Archi-

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bald MacLeish as "the only article on the subject which has not bored me for years." MacLeish had praised the diction of his poetry as "public." "That word, which I had not thought of myself, is a word I want," Yeats wrote to Lady Dorothy Wellesley. Thinking earlier of his ideal auditor, his Connemara fisherman, Yeats had cried,

> . . . 'Before I am old
> I shall have written him one
> Poem maybe as cold
> And passionate as the dawn.'

That is why the tower had to rise out of the stream and the earth, and why the cottages had to remain at its base, to tie it Antaeus-like to the soil, to prevent its wish to soar off into the lofty and the abstract.

Two final Irish houses of Yeats require brief mention. Each in its way preserves the unity of the pattern of his habitation. Early in 1922, with the tower still barely habitable only in summer, George Yeats tired fatally of the hats of the dons' wives in Oxford and resolved to find a house in Dublin. "My Saturn suggested delay but her Mars carried it and she went," Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear. Again their luck held and Mrs. Yeats found at a bargain a fine tall Georgian house at 82 Merrion Square. With some complacency Yeats explained to Mrs. Shakespear that Merrion Square was to Dublin what Berkeley Square was to London. The house had been built about 1740 with rooms "very large and stately" and handsome mantelpieces. Yeats felt, he wrote, "very grand" remembering a street ballad about the Duke of Wellington: " 'In Merrion Square/ This noble hero first drew breath/ Amid a nation's cheers.' " It was an elegant house, withal plain, an appropriate setting for a man who within the next year was to be a senator of Ireland, a D. Litt. of Trinity College, Dublin, and a holder of the Nobel Prize.

In May of 1932 Lady Gregory died. Yeats wrote, "I have lost one who has been to me for nearly forty years my strength and my conscience." At Coole he heard a ragged Dublin sculptor who had called to pay his respects, musing, after staring about him at the pictures of the great who had been associated with that house, " 'All the nobility of earth.' " "I felt he did not mean it for that room alone but for lost tradition," Yeats wrote. He continued:

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"How much of my own work has not been but the repetition of those words." In the same summer Yeats occupied his last Irish house, smaller and more simplified like life itself for him. What he called "this little creeper-covered farm-house" was named 'Riversdale' and was situated in Rathfarnham, "just too far from Dublin to go there without good reason and too far, I hope, for most interviewers and the less determined travelling bores." For Edith Shackleton Heald he drew a plan of his study and went on to describe it:

> All round the study walls are book-cases but some stop half way up and over them are pictures by my brother, my father, by Robert Gregory. On each side of the window into [the] flower garden are two great Chinese pictures (Dulac's gift) and in the window into the greenhouse hangs a most lovely Burne-Jones window (Ricketts's gift). Through the glass door into the flower garden I see the bare boughs of apple trees and a few last flowers. . . .

Through French doors he would walk out into the garden to "share the gooseberries with the bullfinches." Outside there was space for fruit trees, croquet and tennis lawns and a bowling green.

This is an elegant simplicity, but a simplicity, and it was in a real sense a return to the earth, an Antaeus-gesture. Yeats thought of 'Riversdale' as a last place in life. "We have a lease for but thirteen years but that will see me out of life," he wrote to Mrs. Shakespear. Violent poetic work went on in this quiet place, the splendid extravagance of passion of the final lyrical flowing-out of the poet self-defined as "foolish, passionate man," "a wild old wicked man." We can watch the house itself erupt into grand romantic passion within a single poem, "An Acre of Grass."

Picture and book remain,
An acre of green grass
For air and exercise,
Now strength of body goes;
Midnight, an old house
Where nothing stirs but a mouse.

My temptation is quiet.
Here at life's end
Neither loose imagination,

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Nor the mill of the mind
Consuming its rag and bone,
Can make the truth known.

Grant me an old man's frenzy,
Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till Truth obeyed his call;

A mind Michael Angelo knew
That can pierce the clouds,
Or inspired by frenzy
Shake the dead in their shrouds;
Forgotten else by mankind,
An old man's eagle mind.

"Passion to me is the essential," Yeats had written. In a letter to Wyndham Lewis he made clear what passion meant to him, highly defined; he spoke of "passion ennobled by intensity, by endurance, by wisdom. We had it in one man once. He lies in St. Patrick's now under the greatest epitaph in history." The reference of course is to Jonathan Swift.

One who had followed Yeats's own accumulation of passion ennobled by intensity, by endurance, by wisdom, might barely have hoped for something so magnificent at the end as the "bitter and gay" *Last Poems*. It is now that he forms such creatures as Crazy Jane and Tom the Lunatic and John Kinsella lamenting for his old bawd Mrs. Mary Moore. This is Old Man Yeats content at last to "lie down where all the ladders start,/ In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart." Looking about him at the anarchic modern landscape where once again there's a light in Troy, the world "Turning and turning in the widening gyre," where "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold," he reacts in a brilliant saturnine irony, a cackling approving curse, a kind of affirmative for which he finds his own proper phrase, "tragic joy."

Irrational streams of blood are staining earth;
Empedocles has thrown all things about;

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Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy;
We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.

"What matter?" he inquires. "Out of cavern come a voice,/ And all it knows is that one word 'Rejoice!' "

"For laughter too is a passion," as Longinus affirmed long ago. Noble men, in any case, are not going to submit to the death of nobility.

Those that Rocky Face holds dear,
Lovers of horses and of women, shall
From marble of a broken sepulchre,
Or dark betwixt the polecat and the owl,
Or any rich, dark nothing disinter
The workman, noble and saint, and all things run
On that unfashionable gyre again.

What he is involved in, the old poet sees, is simply life, the recurrent native forms of experience, a time of the time of man. It has all happened before and will happen again, with tears and laughter.

On their own feet they came, or on shipboard,
Camel-back, horse-back, ass-back, mule-back,
Old civilisations put to the sword.
Then they and their wisdom went to rack:
No handiwork of Callimachus,
Who handled marble as if it were bronze,
Made draperies that seemed to rise
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;
His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;
All things fall and are built again
And those that build them again are gay.

Perhaps the strangest, truest, most exhilarating shape Yeats found to embody his last nobility is the stilt-walking hero of "High Talk." He is a lofty clown-figure, both artist and artisan, both man and myth, both father and child. He is an extravagant attenuation, teetering, grimacing, just dangerously controlled on the edge of unreason, a funny and terrible fusion of Yeats's central conjunctions: workman and noble and saint, hunchback and saint

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and fool. He is all metaphor, Malachi, stilts and all. Earlier Yeats had spoken of art as "but a vision of reality"; now, even in the prose of his letters, he is using such phrases as "the madness of vision." Here is the whole poem, which is among other things a travesty of a Petrarchan sonnet, in octave and sestet, but rhymed in couplets, and cast in long snaky hexameters of dactyl and anapest:

Processions that lack high stilts have nothing that catches the eye.
What if my great-granddad had a pair that were twenty foot high,
And mine were but fifteen foot, no modern stalks upon higher,
Some rogue of the world stole them to patch up a fence or a fire.
Because piebald ponies, led bears, caged lions, make but poor shows,
Because children demand Daddy-long-legs upon his timber toes,
Because women in the upper storeys demand a face at the pane,
That patching old heels they may shriek, I take to chisel and plane.

Malachi Stilt-Jack am I, whatever I learned has run wild,
From collar to collar, from stilt to stilt, from father to child.
All metaphor, Malachi, stilts and all. A barnacle goose
Far up in the stretches of night; night splits and the dawn breaks loose;
I, through the terrible novelty of light, stalk on, stalk on;
Those great sea-horses bare their teeth and laugh at the dawn.

The speaker of those lines has news for the Delphic Oracle. His is a vision that sees so much, so far, so wide, so high, and so deep that it must be mad. It rises out of the vision of life as tragedy but expresses itself as satyr-comedy. Those eyes, those ancient glittering eyes, are gay. I suggest that the poem lays out, with splendid angularity, the limits and the main members of the nobility of the house of Yeats. It is traditionary and familial, it has run wild from father to child, it inherits (almost) the heroic height of a twenty-foot great-granddad. It makes its own vestment by its own craft applying its own tools to its own cheap native materials: it takes to chisel and plane. It stretches the human figure presump-

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tuously, grandly, and comically toward the sky without ever losing touch of the earth: Daddy-long-legs upon his timber toes. It is sophisticated and innocent. Its function is to make shows, processions, to leer upon children and men and women at their ordinary work with astonishing grimaces from surprising heights. And then to stalk on through the terrible novelty of light to the place where night splits and the dawn breaks loose.

In the postscript of a letter to Ethel Mannin a few months before he died Yeats wrote of the arrangements he was making for his burial. "It will be in a little remote country churchyard in Sligo, where my great grandfather was the clergyman a hundred years ago." He quoted the now famous lines from "Under Ben Bulben" which he designed for his epitaph: " 'Cast a cold eye/ On life, on death;/ Horseman, pass by.' " Typically, at the end, Yeats wished to lie down where all his ladders started. When he spoke of his plans to his sister Lily she commented drily, " 'This is a break with tradition. There has not been a tombstone in the Yeats family since the eighteenth century. The family has always been very gay.' " The Yeats habit, he explained to Edith Shackleton Heald, was to "let the grass grow over the dead and speak of them no more." The tombstone would be a ceremonious addition, but in Sligo churchyard Yeats would still be robed in the long friends.

Among those stilt-walkers who are poets, no modern stalks upon higher than Yeats. And not many ancients. What he shares with the other greatest poets is uniqueness. In the long run he is only himself, self-defined—self-born, after all. He mocks our enterprise, though we must do our best to praise him.

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DENNIS SCHMITZ

Eclogues: III

& the river worked a cool hand
between the hills. the sun
stood on my knife-
end! the innocence
the white underskin of the stick
still
in my hand. the steel that rides
the burred wood like a brush
of light! the whittler leans
back into the tree's
shadow. heart of wood
the eye skinned shut
like a closed knife.

the trees too sleep
with open leaves. the noon
sun dries the damp green & veins
of green turn
in their skins. if I love
the oak & have left my name
on its rough skin
I have felt the slight
roots at their furthest
end hold the earth
as a baby's hands hold
the mother's soft inside
flesh afraid of birth. we have
upturned trees
the oak & the elm that held
the farm before
we opened the furrows
& leaves have died
as I held them. a man must

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grow from the inside
  as a tree breaks whole
from the seed.

in the morning the mists rolled
  on the water. the hills were
black with wet
trees that moved in the fog
  when we moved
on the water. my father's skiff
was green
  with my mother's name
black on its side. our lines were
stiff & solid
  held the skiff
like a great fish
  out of the water.

my brother's wife
  how pale! the shine
of her skin against the black stove
  the blue
fright of her eyes. the knives
that were my mother's
  were blue
steel scraped clean. & blue
the curtains of our
  kitchen. & the changing river
that ruffled
  outside the window.

the lantern slept
in my thighs. the boy's beam
  of light. my sister had
breasts
  already & boys came to watch
on the porch where my mother
knits.
  the slowly smaller roll

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of yarn clicks
across the boards. my sister
  sits in the faint light
where the sun is high
  as the roof of the house.

my mother's blood. her
  tight blue skin. the boy
pauses. the porch is white & a white
screen door snickers
  shut. my feet
are bare, a blue map of veins & soft
from shoes we wore only in
  winter. on the high ground bare
of trees my father's
  grave burns in the bright
grass. the sun
is hot & our unturned
  fields are green. my mother grows
thin.

It Is Here Inside Me

it is here inside me
when as a boy
I had to climb
down inside the cistern
outside my grandmother's house
a tiny yellowed watch
it was my mother's
it moved with two tiny hands
& a spot of red
at the center like blood
the smallest puncture
it was my mother's &

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had dropped
deep into the water
the water was black & heavy
as oil
slick like the sides of the cistern
I could see the sky
overhead like a silver coin
& my mother's worried face
watching
she always loved me best
& inside myself
I sometimes feel the terrible
stillness
the weight of those black waters

The Fishing

the leaves were knee-
deep
around the elms &
inside the stream
the fish
flashed like spears
at the feathers
of the hook
dreaming of birds.
on the bank in the solid
air
the rod looked
like a spear in the sun.
overhead a hawk
lay on top the air
like a leaf
lifted up by the stream.

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Poem IV

I am the garden of flies.
the pale
grasses bend.
the wings of skinned bark
the wind pulls
back. I have loved the orchard
the damp roots
working in the dry earth
I uncover them
the animal sobs at its birth
a man shouts
in anger. with anger he repays
the blood
he borrows. the living net
of veins

Poem IX

the rabbit leaves
a track
like two dry fingers
in the new snow
the new season! & I have put
my fingers
once to a dying rabbit's
guts
that wound like roads
between the bones
where the bung-hole opens
on the white fur
like an eye

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Poem XVI

the heavy ribs of the trees
the leaves
tuck under
the sun, father, wakes the birds
& the fluid clearings
fill
with light. a quiet time
the hunter
caught with his gun
the cool shells
still
in his vest stands
under the trees faint & half-afraid
the birds
will move

ADRIENNE RICH

Autumn Sequence

1.
An old shoe, an old pot, an old skin,
and dreams of the subtly tyrannical.
Thirst in the morning; waking into the blue

drought of another October
to read the familiar message nailed
to some burning bush or maple.

Breakfast under the pines, late yellow-
jackets fumbling for manna on the rim
of the stone crock of marmalade,

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and shed pine-needles drifting
in the half-empty cup.
Generosity is drying out,

it's an act of will to remember
May's sticky-mouthed buds
on the provoked magnolias.

2.
Still, a sweetness hardly earned
by virtue or craft, belonging
by no desperate right to me

(as the marmalade to the wasp
who risked all in a last euphoria
of hunger)

washes the horizon. A quiet
after weeping, salt still on the tongue,
is like this, when the autumn planet

looks me straight in the eye
and straight into the mind
plunges its impersonal spear:

Fill and flow over, think
till you weep, then sleep
to drink again.

3.
Your flag is dried-blood, turkey-comb
flayed stiff in the wind,
half-mast on the day of victory,

anarchist prince of evening marshes.
Your eye blurs in a wet smoke,
the stubble freezes under your heel,

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the cornsilk Mädchen all hags now,
their gold teeth drawn,
the milkweeds gutted and rifled,

but not by you, foundering hero!
The future reconnoitres in dirty boots
along the cranberry-dark horizon.

Stars swim like grease-flecks
in that sky, night pulls a long knife.
Your empire drops to its knees in the dark.

4.
Skin of wet leaves on asphalt.
Charcoal slabs pitted with gold.
The reason for cities comes clear.

There must be a place, there has come a time—
where so many nerves are fusing—
for a purely moral loneliness.

Behind bloodsoaked lights of the avenues,
in the crystal grit of flying snow,
in this water-drop bulging at the taphead,

forced by dynamos three hundred miles
from the wild duck's landing and the otter's dive,
for three seconds of quivering identity.

There must be a place. But the eyeball stiffens
as night tightens and my hero passes out
with a foam of stale gossip coating his tongue.

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BENJAMIN DE MOTT

An Eye on the Weather

WEATHER IS COMING, PLANS ARE BOUND TO CHANGE. But, as happens in any decent stretch of sun, people have stopped thinking about weather.

Cooks, babies and old folks are napping on Orton's Point. Across the bay on fairways and greens tiny jewels flicker—men laying hose and setting out sprinklers that catch the sun. Tradesmen locked up at lunchtime as though assured of another whole month of money. Maud Ledeen is scratching with her steelpen in the cool dim waxy light of the Ladies Social Library. She turns out scrimshawed postcards saying that some requested book is in. Maud turns them out slowly and sends them in batches, not in twos and threes. When the bad weather strikes, her clients will leave and the notices will be forwarded to Merion or Essex Fells or Longmeadow, or miss people altogether. Students from Keisel Hall are standing by the begonia barrels on the postoffice steps, others are sitting on the row of salvaged church pews in front of the Esso. They are a sight. The girls have heavy straight black dirty hair and plummy round behinds that are ungirdled and arousing inside black slacks. The boys are tight-hipped with wiry matted arms and hairless chests, and they wear sandals and cruel smoked glasses. They want their mail. After the middle of the season they begin coming for it minutes earlier every day. But the students' loved ones are closer by weeks than they think. The last dance concert will be cancelled when the weather empties the Point.

Overhead there are as yet no warnings. At noontime the August sun was tremendous. The breeze is the usual southwest slant. The bay is the bay—icy with a small chop. But the forecaster has spoken, weather stations are watching. Five days of rain up the Reach from the ocean. Afterward a week of fog. Whatever any schedule says, the season is ending now.

In the oldest house on the Point, the Lanning place at the tip, Marguerite and Mathilde are going through bureau drawers in the master bedroom. Their cheeks are hot, they are excited. The girls are teenagers from Montpelier—France, not Vermont—exchange college students-to-be. Good girls, they never in their

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lives until this minute thought of doing what they are doing here. What are they after in the Lannings' bedroom? Jewels, contraceptives, whatever they find. At lunchtime in the sticky kitchen they looked at each other across the table, a short conversation of eyes. Each knew the other was dangerous. Their job has been easy but boring. Baby-sitting for three phlegmatic children, nap to snack to club to supper to bath to breakfast. The telephone rings a dozen times a day but not for them. (Monsieur and Madame are cruising, they say over and over again, they return soon.) The daytime television is stupid. Chicken and potato fairs, old men in white hats and white moustaches playing guitars. How much longer is two weeks, they ask themselves. Why are we arguing with each other when all we have is ourselves? Summer American—what is it that it doesn't know enough to end? In the bedroom Mathilde, a strand of hair falling on her cheek, holds aloft an article of Monsieur's private clothing, a waist-trimmer. It is fresh from the laundry but still private. She fits it to herself and together they collapse rolling and giggling on the bed. They can't hurt themselves behaving as they are. But when, during Orientation Week, an elderly administrative lady offers them smiling kindness at a tea, they will drop down behind their eyes, correct but stony. The administrative lady will tell herself that young people in France lose their freshness early. And that loss is unnecessary. The storm won't entertain Marguerite and Mathilde, but it will set them loose. In forty-eight hours they, Madame, and the children will be chuffing down the turnpike in a Volks bus, boredom over for a while.

Monsieur himself, Henry Lanning, perspiring in the rope-strewn, ginwhiffy cockpit of his boat while his charterer watches, has an inkling that time is short. He is parting with his boat, an end-of-season charter. (His wife is unloading gear onto the club dock. Yesterday both of them forgot the job and remembered a dinner party.) But Lanning thinks of a fresh start, not about endings. At one and the same time he hacks at the panel of the binnacle post with a screwdriver, swears at himself, searches his memory for the whereabouts of a dollhouse key, and considers the direction of his life. The charterer, whose name is Hamill, has been forewarned—about everything except the present farce of toolmanship. He knows his man for a lazy charmer, a round-cheeked, red-faced, tousle-haired professor in his forties. He knows this

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boat is never in order and that the owner has never apologized in his life. ("Yes it's reasonable," Hamill's yacht broker agreed unsellingly. His tone told the story.) Arriving early, feeling spiky, Hamill spent an hour whipping lines and blacking the stove, enjoying the sweet diamonded lapping in the close air below deck. Put the owner on the defensive where he belongs. "I see your binnacle light is out," were his first words to Henry Lanning. "We planned to do some night cruising." Instead of calling the yard, Lanning brought up his tools and pried open the post, breathing hard. What he meant to do was to keep faith with a half-a-day-old pledge to work.

At last night's party he sat for an hour opposite a classmate close to glory in Washington—a man who announced in his senior year that he would be rich by thirty and afterward a Cabinet member or other kingpin at court. The fellow did not intend to be condescending—but he was golden, buoyant and free with names. He irritated Lanning. His wife did the same. She was beside Lanning at dinner and with her he failed completely. She listened with unimpressed eyes as he stumbled remembering something seen in the *Times*. Sleepless on his pillow afterward, Lanning, a stylish, well-liked English teacher at a second-rate girls' college, resolved that the last weeks of summer would not find him at the club or on the water. He would lay his hands on the key to the dollhouse or break a window. (The key vanished at the beginning of the summer. Lanning went around the club asking himself and friends how could he get on with his work when he'd lost the key to his study?)

In his right mind Lanning would now be jollying up the charterer, instead of ruining the binnacle innards. Taking in the weather he would say in his slow amused voice that night cruising might be damp duty before you knew it. But Lanning's right mind is out of reach. Two weeks, he is thinking as the oily springs slip in his fingers and the chop nudges his tail through the hull. No more reading, he could start straight in to write. It would make sense to try locking himself up. . . . But the dollhouse roof leaks, the children will bicker and the night they and his wife and the French girls leave, Lanning will win thirty-five dollars playing stud poker with locals in the back room of Hinckley and Allen's, the grocery store. (Henry Lanning is the only summer resident ever to have been invited to play.) The next morning, glad no-

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body is watching but not actually depressed, he will hang up the dollhouse key on the kitchen rack and close the house. He will drive south to rejoin his family, singing aloud with the radio for the first hundred miles of the trip.

Inside the airy bare-beamed clubhouse Mrs. Bettie McCullough, widow of the last commodore, is sitting on the piano bench staring up the bay at a vacation schooner bound, she thinks, for their cove. Bettie is a cheerful girl, though she has next to no money and two out-sized, hard-to-manage boys. But she feels trapped at this moment. The cargo of vacationers aboard the approaching boat is the cause. The clubhouse is empty. Dave and Jim McCullough are on the water. Or else climbing Berry Hill (the club's annual mountain picnic). Or else at the fairgrounds betting a one-day card of trotters. Amiable Henry Lanning is useless. And there is a job to be done, Bettie knows this. The schooner people aren't wanted, someone has to make that point. Let them traipse up the boardwalk through the club and out to the road—schoolmarms, stenographers, musky fuzzy highschool boys—and there'll be trouble. The club phone will ring with complaints from houses on the drive. Friday night at the lobsterama the subject will be raised in Bettie's hearing. And they are right, she tells herself, putting out her cigarette in a shell. Perfectly right. They are paying her. David McCullough is dock and clubhouse man. James McCullough runs sailing classes and Turnabout races. The yard bill from Sam Cousins for her thirty-year-old Atlantic, the lowest number on the bay, is mailed to the club treasurer. The McCulloughs are sent no bill for dues. Her obligation is clear. A half-dozen times this summer, when neither of her boys was in sight and the cove echoed with a megaphone shout (MOVE COMMITTEE BOAT PLEASE!) from the Gauthier twins or somebody else powering in to use the dock at the end of a cruise, she recrossed her legs in the butterfly chair on the porch and didn't move. Forty is too old to play dockboy. But each refusal was harder, she cannot look away now.

There is, of course, no need to look away. The season for dockboys is finished. No more calls for helpers to move the committee boat or open the sailbag shed or dive after wandering prams. As for the schooner, its crew is already on the sheets, preparing to come off a downwind tack. On deck old salts are already scaring new salts with the forecast. The club cove is cramped in weather.

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They will reach across to a snug off Darling's Island and heave to. God willing, says the Captain, a canny old ham who will clear eleven thousand dollars on his boats this summer, God willing we'll make for home in the morning.

But thoughts of the mess at hand, not of weather ahead, are in Bettie's mind as she readies herself for this scrap. She lights another cigarette, squinting against the smoke. Even as she confronts her thoughts—the idea of putting her house on the market is one of them—she remembers her husband saying that bores and false pride go together. Her husband was a popular man. But there are facts. She sees herself standing on the dock yelling into the noise of the dory outboard, waving off the schooner crowd, shouting like a fishwife while childish Henry Lanning looks on undisturbed. Who am I to hound anybody? she thinks. Charity cases, boatload after boatload of them, old women in flowered prints and young women in bikini-topped stretch pants—where are the McCulloughs in the procession? Nagged by the thought that all that really frightens her is the prospect of being humiliated, Bettie nevertheless concludes, sensibly, that her boys need to be set straight. No father wants his sons to be poor-mouthed. But is it right to pass twenty with no sense of reality? "Mac—" she says her husband's name aloud as though she has been talking to him, circling carefully around his stubbornness, and she is shaken. Leaning forward, her hand on the piano, she studies the curly smile of the young Jerome Kern on a pile of sheet-music weighted by a ball of marline and somebody's pliers. Then she shuts her eyes. After some minutes, lifting her eyes, she will see that the schooner—a pretty picture, sails just off the lovely position of wing and wing—has altered its course. She will wash her face, brush back her hair, put on her sunglasses and go down the walk to chat a while with Henry's charterer. Without trying, the charterer will put everything out of her mind. On the way home in her car she will wail like a woman in an Irish play, feeling stronger with each convulsion. The storm will break while her sons are ahead at the racetrack. They will come back dripping and noisy, sneakers gushing, with a present for her. A bottle of bad champagne. Her warning words—too sane, too much fuss—won't be spoken this season.

The Gauthier twins, Pattie and Phil, aged twenty-two, also lately bereaved, are sitting alone in their solarium. They have had a visitor, a contractor named Wessel, and he has just left. He came

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to finish planning a raid on the Salt Pond beach at the south border of the Gauthier-Vincent property. The place is thick with Wessel's cigar smoke. Expressionless, Pattie empties an ashtray and looks about—a gray-eyed, gentle-faced child—for other offensive traces. LeRoy the gardener is cutting the grass. He passes close to the octagon with the noisy machine and waves at them over the clanging and banging. Pattie nods abstractedly. The sound goes away. They are depressed, the Gauthiers—depressed, guilt-ridden, ashamed of their greed. Neither can speak. The Vincents their cousins are poor. The Salt Pond Beach belonged to the Vincents by convention—because their houses were closest to it. But the twins have laid plans that disregard the convention. It was an Ellsworth man, a lawyer named Cunningham, who worked them around to where they are. He claimed it was senseless to wait. Dig in the piles now, was his line. You can't negotiate with Vincents. They'll talk all year about rights, act now. Wessel's ready to go, start driving piles Monday. Surprise is the ticket.

Why was he sure they would listen to him? the twins ask themselves, bothered by each other's silence. LeRoy approaches again with the mower. They are wary, God knows, they like their independence—but what family arguments have Pattie and Phil Gauthier ever stirred up?

"Roy!" Phil shouts at LeRoy, meaning for him to leave them alone for a minute, but LeRoy can't hear a thing.—They did let the man in, they remind themselves, and the man did persuade them. What's done is done. Surprise is the ticket. The light changes on the lawn, the figure of June Vincent jumps at them in their thoughts. *He thinks we're babies.* Today and yesterday the twins have said these words several times. But their ideas have become cloudy. In his college years Cousin June was a spinnaker wizard famous the length of the bay. And although these days the twins themselves own the cups, June remains the club's only hero of legend. But it is a time before June's racing years that they remember. A summer when they were ten or eleven and under June's wing. They were authorities before then, so they thought. Experienced explorers, masters of the cove, the pond, miles of shore. June showed them they knew nothing. They didn't know that beyond the Salt Pond lay another body of water, hidden by a pine-screened narrows. Or that the "end" of Second Pond was an island, and that the tide ran out into a freshwater river on the

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other side of it. They didn't know there was an abandoned silver mine in the woods beyond their father's landing strip and their Tante Wanda's studio. They didn't know that Tante Wanda wasn't married to her husband—the man they and everyone else called Johnny. Or that Tante Wanda went to Russia to live when she was eighteen. Or that in one tall cupboard of her studio there was a statue of a naked man, veins and muscles visible as in a health chart. They didn't know that the cobwebby wicker-covered flagons in the old greenhouse had wine in their bottoms and that it was possible to hide there in a rainstorm playing twenty thousand leagues under, or that bats inside were killed with brooms and empty hornet's nests burned with a torch roll made of the Bangor *News,* or that a person could win a bet in a canoe by crossing the pond and back without a paddle (stand on the gunwales and jounce, Dumbo) or that by climbing a tree at the edge of a meadow on the east side of Second Pond you could look down and read a message laid out in stones—SAVE US O LORD—in the tall grass. June always had a trick, a revelation.

And therefore—what? Were they punishing him? Naturally. Stabbing him in the back for revenge—but revenge for what? Going to the window again to wave off LeRoy who is making yet another pass, Phil Gauthier doesn't look at his sister. Stern-faced beyond his years, he tells himself that managing for yourself means deciding what you have to do and not having second thoughts, not worrying about what people think, pointing up as high as you can even if the result is that you can't look June Vincent or anyone else in the eye—if you ever do see him again. The room shakes with the roar of the mower as Phil shouts at Roy. Roy puts a warty hand to his ear, then bends over and in the sudden stillness Phil glances warily at his sister. She is looking straight ahead. He sits down again, impassive. It would be wrong, he thinks, to weaken—

As it happens, Wessel's men don't work in rain. And June Vincent won't be coming this summer. June is about to go into business for himself, manufacturing a disposable razor to be handed out at motel desks. Word of bad weather will give him the excuse he needs for postponing his vacation. What is more, the rain will keep the twins from the water, there will be no activity to cut short their brooding. The third day of the blow Phil will think of an excuse to call June long distance. He will pretend that Sam

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Cousins has asked him whether he knows what June wants done to his boat. Pattie on another phone will begin talking about their beach project and the voice on the other end will sound interested and enthusiastic. Hearing the Gauthiers talk, June will remember that he and his wife are sorry for them, poor waifs, haven't an idea what to do with themselves. One of them ought to find somebody to marry. Both of them. Phil Gauthier, outwardly calm, inwardly exhilarated, will hear his sister laughing with June's wife about the Razor Game. It will be arranged on the phone for them to have Thanksgiving dinner together at June's in Rochester. After Christmas they will fly out to St. Thomas together, warm new friends.

The new tenants in Tante Wanda's studio, Trudy and Tilford Horne by name, have been following their mid-afternoon custom, rowing the Salt Pond shores with their children. It is a lazy expedition. Trailing hands in the boat's wake, their son and daughter collect images and lore. They look at barnacles whitening in the sun, pale green waftings of kelp, kingfishers' death dives, a swimming red fox surprised as they drift into his course, hating over the water at them with his eyes . . . . They collect firewood also, scavenging on ledges. Horne has seen his children press their cheeks against the smooth glistening warmth of slabwood scorts, edgings of spruce and hemlock weathered for months and miles of tide. In the evening Horne brings the wood up in a blanket from the shore to the studio on the Point. He plays *Curlylocks, Curlylocks* and *The Knave of Hearts* on Wanda's piano and his children sing and roast squares of cheese in the fireplace. He hears his wife's teasing voice talking to the dog as she works at their dinner. The fireplace warmth reaches him as the night comes down, he feels an excess of sweetness that causes him to blink.

But here is Horne at Bug Island in the center of Second Pond—he has found a trove. Layer upon layer of untouched scorts, enough wood for a month. Out of control for some reason, ready to load the boat above the gunwales, he sends the children back and forth from the boat to the beach. He hurries them, they are tired. The eight-year-old boy stumbles losing his armload in the water, ripping his knee on barnacles. Horne slaps his face. The girl cries out and the startled boy looks at her, lips apart. His teeth are red. Horne scrambles over the thwart and seizes him—"Tim, Tim, Tim, Tim," he says hoarsely, pressing the child to his

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chest, hurting him in the embrace. The wood, the great trove, will never be burned. Horne will carry his son up on his shoulders, prancing and neighing to make up for the outburst, having dumped the wood on the beach where storm tides will drown it at midnight. Long before the sunless days are over, he and his wife and children will have left for home.

Everywhere the same rule, the same heedlessness. Melanie Crittenden, who told the Hornes of Wanda's studio because she herself had found a place to buy, stands crestfallen in the guestroom of her friend Dottie Bamford's place on the Point, listening to her son abuse her. He is furious, and this rupture was avoidable. Always before, Mrs. Crittenden, a radiant, pink-skinned sixty-year-old lady with bright innocent eyes and a witty tongue, has kept Lenoir Crittenden entertained with her ploys and rituals— Daiquiris that take half an hour to mix, aging wives of minor literary men to be visited and aired, occasional lucky hits in ironstone or Windsor chairs, checks from the *Reader's Digest* for picturesque speech . . . And she has been asking very little, only a coat of paint for protection. But Lenoir, frail yet threatening behind his thick shell glasses, tells her curtly to sit down. He lectures her rudely. What is it that she has done? She has managed every detail, every step of the way. It was her ingenuity that found the place—a fisherman's cottage at Casline, just across the road from the water, its own charming boathouse on the beach, limitless possibilities. Lost in debt, no resources—unless her loom is counted, her portable kiln, her typewriter, and three hundred copies of her privately printed poems—she raised a down payment. She asked for nothing but a bit of painting. But Lenoir stands before her not in one of his tizzies but shouting. He is telling her the loan companies have refused him and his car has collapsed and he has had to quit his job to come up in obedience to her wire and her extravagance is ruining him and the place is a wreck and it was for sale for eight years at a lower price than she paid, it will never be habitable . . . Lenoir is almost sobbing in his mixture of fury, helplessness, hatred of his helplessness—but he has a point. Everything he has, he has given to his mother. He is drained. He has travelled down and down since his graduation. A job in a preparatory school whose headmaster, a doctor, proved to be a heroin addict. A job in a museum sorting bones. Managing editor of a vanity publishing house. At the moment he reads proof for the Man-

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hattan telephone directory. But it isn't this decline, or the cottage itself, that has set him off. He loves his mother with a helpless pitying pitiable love. She is the most interesting character he has met. Superbly loyal, she sees his failures only as evidence of the turpitude of others. But with this painting scheme she has broken faith with him. She might as well say out loud that he has nothing to do, that he has never and will never have anything to do. To be summoned from his 4th Street room, his recorders, his Frescobaldi manuscripts, the long sheaves of undemanding abstract names, addresses, and numbers, his apples and milkbottles and Saki and dirty shirts and piles of *Church Times*—to be summoned from these as a housepainter? Jealous Dottie Bamford, a crone, their hostess, listens outside the door, her tongue on the sill of her lower lip, as Lenoir Crittenden lays down his word to his mother, cuts his ties, kills the best love either of them has: he will not do such work.—Nor will anyone in the storm to come, the thing could have been laid over.

All of it could have been laid over. Men dreaming of the click of the windlass in starlight, girls wanton before their time, notes mastered that won't be played, words written that won't be read, resolutions framed that can't be kept. . . . Nobody on the Point would speak or strike or weep as he now speaks if he looked both ways, if he looked into the moment after. For of course it's never wind and rain only that are on their way. The sun already is burying itself, the schooner off Darling's has masses of foam rolling at her bow, the Jays and Atlantics and Mercuries and little Turnabouts in the club basin are cutting and sheering nervously over their anchors. In an hour, two hours, the true wind should be on them, tailing them off, blocks crackling, from their buoys. But the storm could veer and it wouldn't matter. Such changes occur hereabouts. A low above Nova Scotia sucks the turbulence eastward, northward. The center vanishes. We miss the worst of it.

But weather or not, nothing stays where it was, there is always a distraction. Or worse than a distraction. In the cove at this minute a ghost boat is approaching, a *Marie Celeste* returned, its landfall near at hand. The boat, a small sloop, came out of the east, no hand at the tiller. Two sweaters, a man's and a woman's, hang on the centerboard case; they are wet. Awash under a thwart—the boat has taken considerable water—are cigarettes, a lighter, sun glasses, sun lotion, a man's wristwatch with a heavy gold strap, a

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silken scarf printed with Viareggio, Alassio, Biarritz, Monte Estoril, East Hampton, and other names of seaside towns. The boat came off Tinker's on a tack that seemed firm enough until the breeze pretzeled, the boom slammed over on a jibe rocking her heavily, the main awash. Now she hangs on the swell with the boom flush against the port stay, digging water, the canvas billowing, the bow hovering like a needle just caught in magnetic range.

There is no name on the transom, but death or the end of things could as well as not be stencilled there. Boats empty at their landfall, personal possessions afloat on the floorboards, bring long thoughts. The finder of this craft, whatever his thoughts, won't be what he was the minute before she caught his eye, the minute before his palm touched her deck or his glance took in the scarf blurred and heavy in the wet. Loosening the halyards, unsnapping the sails, thinking whom to call, how to begin, why a wandering craft chooses his shore, he will forget his needs and plans.

And the boat is coming, the wind gusting over the transom is driving her hard again, the mainsheet paid to its limit. The sun is blotted, dirty heads blacken the lawns of the estates across the bay. The tide has turned, it is running in. A half mile from the Point, beyond Dottie Bamford's beach and the tidal falls, where the high wire strides down to the mark of the lowest tide, diggers are finishing their day. Above them gulls wheel and wallow, maddened by the crunching of claw spades driven through the mussel bed. Their hoarse cries thicken the air as the workers plunge through mud to their rowboat. Very close, trembling, the guideless boat waits, its bow aimed toward Trudy and Til, Mrs. Crittenden and Lenoir, the twins, nameless houses. Drinks are being passed in these houses, lamps lighted, fires laid. Voices are saying what voices say. The clammers down the beach sit together, oblivious, washing and sorting under the grey cave of sky that makes bat-like shadows of the gulls as it lowers. A man will rise shortly and with a powerful upward heave dislodge the oar to which the clammers' boat is moored. And at or near this moment the homeless craft, in full view of the cove, her bow borne upward by the lift of the inshore current, will glide over the sand, beached by a decisive wave.

A cry will ring out, a screen door will slam. Somebody will come running toward the boat down the combed paths that lead to the edge of the sea.

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LYSANDER KEMP

Dithyrambic Elegy for Bolivar

from the Spanish of Carlos Pellicer

Ten atlantes[1] come forward
along the shores of America,
bearing a coffin on their shoulders.
The Andes rise on one side, on the other
the sea drenches the waters of the sky.

The tropical evening is a huge
backdrop of twilights which the wind
paints and rolls up, to unroll it
over the other hemisphere.
Those men cannot find a place of noble
repose for the corpse they carry, the corpse
of the Genius, that travels everywhere
under the waters of the sun.
And they seem to be carrying a mountain,
their thighs straining with the burden.

When they come to the outskirts of a seaport,
the inhabitants spit at them,
threaten them with fire.
That man has transfixed the hearts of his people
for a century, moving among them with his radiant
hands and open eyes and glorious purpose,
as inexpugnable as a mystery.

Mankind will never see anything
greater under the sun!
His first name
has a fine Greek ring, and his last name,
in the ancient tongue of the Basques,
means *Where there are windmills*. I was born
to sing his marvelous life in every

1 Masculine equivalents of caryatids.

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plaza in every city and village.
Sing, Muse, sing the consecrated rage
of the poet who has no language
but who knows all the intricate rhythms of silence!
I think of that Hero of great dreams whenever
I ride the tallest mast of my
symphonic ship of memory, whose course
is set toward the next star.
His childhood was a sorry toy; his youth,
all love and wealth and travel,
was a proud story; and his last years
were that fabulous text
in which his last dream was extinguished.

He was graceful and vigorous, an arrow
piercing time's obdurate shield.
His elegance called up lovely names,
his conversation was a goblet full of stars.
He could break horses and swim the widest river.
He was lithe and agile when he played that fantastic
game at the Falls of the Tequendama,
but he strode like a giant
when he fought for human liberty among
the volcanoes of the Equator.

Generous, like the sun. A fine dancer.
His courtesy was an odor of magnolias
along jungle trails.
He was loved by many women.
His thoughts electrified the climate
of those torpid days,
and his prophetic meditations filled
the dark cup of time to overflowing.
Mankind will never see anything
greater under the sky.
His heart was as sensitive as the golden light
that bathes the hands of prayer. He felt
the words of the Universe crumble
on his lips, and his soul was as clear
and tragic as a desert spring.

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The Southern Cross lighted his shadow
and all the Andes knew him.
He wounded fate itself,
in those fateful days,
with the hurricane of his genius.
He loved America as no one else has loved her,
and like the god Quetzalcóatl, he was burned
on the pyre of a supernal conflagration.
Mankind will never see anything
greater under the sky!

His soul was wounded by treachery.
He was cursed by the very people he freed.
The last days of his life were canyons
rocking with wild cries
like dynamite exploding in the wind.
Oh ruins of the sun! Colossal ruins
of a divine spirit in the golden glare of the thunder!
I beg God's help to evoke your greatness,
my prince of the noblest dreams!
Your funeral procession is marching between
the sea and the Andes, the water and the sky.
The dawn rises with tragic gestures,
and the night, enhancing its sobriety, lurks
in the monumental dark of the cedars.
I have walked for miles behind that cortege,
but all I find is hatred, envy and misery
and the blood-smeared hand of power.
The lives of the men you leagued together
with your dreams and your glory
are impoverished by hate and fear.
Did you plow the sea?
Did you sow the wind?
No one has ever loved as you have, and therefore
no one has ever known a more opulent sorrow.
Father. Friend. Teacher.

The cortege plods forward
through the tropical evening.

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The face of the Genius
is rotting in its golden mask.
The sea begins to vanish
at the shining of the first star.
Three colors reappear in the East
and are fused into one cloud.
The wounded triangles of the Andes
unite the shadows. A wave
breaks on the shore. The design
of all things is scattered.
A huge star breaks from a cloudbank.
The black and broken peak of a volcano
changes its profile again
at the passing of a cloud. And among
all that shattered architecture
the ten atlantes, ten figures
carved from living shadow, come forward
along the condemned and desert shores of America.

BURTON RAFFEL

Translations from St. John of the Cross

STANZAS COMPOSED ABOUT AN ECSTASY OF DEEP CONTEMPLATION

I reached that unknown place
And, staying there, knew
Nothing true.

I came to that unknown place,
Knowing I had come
But not how, or where from;

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All laws and boundaries were erased.
Who could say
How, staying there, I knew
Nothing true?

I knew all knowing
Of peace, of worship,
Locked in silence stripped
Of all but truth, yet growing
Darker, not glowing,
As I stayed and stammered what I knew:
Nothing true.

So caught
In my trance, so wild,
I felt my body brought
Far from all feeling, crying
Loud with new senses, taught
New wisdom, and how I knew
Nothing true.

Rising from flesh,
Self loosening off,
Are wisdom enough
For wisdom to scatter like ash,
For wider seeing to see fresh
And new, why it knew
Nothing true.

Soaring so high
In such deep unknowing
That blackness swirling in the sky
Is night's brightness flowing
Is only truth showing
Wisdom how it knew
Nothing true.

This unknowing knowing
Works with such power

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That scholars skilled in throwing
Words shake and cower,
Unlearned in the highest knowing,
Unable to say they knew
Nothing true.

This sublime unknowing towers
So tall
That knowledge, climbing, has fallen,
Then and now
And always, while those unlearning all
The knowing and skill they knew
See everything true.

Whoever thirsts
For this noblest knowing:
Know, last and first,
It comes from God, showing
Us mercy, letting us go,
Letting us stay, confessing that we knew
Nothing true.

PERFECTION PERFECTED

To turn from clay
To Creator,
To care in quiet for soul
And love and Lover,
Is all.

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RUSSELL FRASER

Rationalism and the Discursive Style

POETRY AND PROSE OF HIGH QUALITY ARE WRITTEN in England during the eighteenth century. The range of which either is capable is, however, remarkably narrow. This narrowness of range is attributable, it seems to me, to the generalizing psychology of the Age of Reason. It is characteristic of the rationalist, whose temper is synthetic rather than analytic, that he should prefer the synoptic or cursory view of things and the imperial or prescriptive manner in presenting that view, to the close scrutiny of particulars and the patient ascending from them to the making of a general statement.

One result of his preference is that the explicitly intellectual poetry of the eighteenth century, whether philosophic or political or encomiastic, poetry which aims at convincing the understanding, is generally unsatisfactory. Intellectual conviction (as opposed to the coercing of the emotions) depends on the adducing and analyzing of analogous cases. The rationalist, if he resorts to analogy, is mostly content to stipulate or posit. He is not much given to the pursuing or exploring of ramifications. He does not look very hard at the comparable instance. His attempt at the writing of reasoned or discursive prose is marked, therefore, by the same loss in real seeing as is manifest in his poetry. The prose of Pope's contemporary, George Lillo, the author of the most popular tragedy of the first half of the eighteenth century, is excellently illustrative in this connection because, as its subject is the anatomy of evil, it has to do, necessarily, with the exercising of the mind. Here is a fair representation of the style of *The London Merchant* (1731):

> A dismal gloom obscures the face of day; either the sun has slipped behind a cloud, or journeys down the west of heaven with more than common speed to avoid the sight of what I'm doomed to act. Since I set forth on this accursed design, where'er I tread, methinks the solid earth trembles beneath my feet. Yonder limpid stream, whose

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> hoary fall has made a natural cascade, as I passed by, in doleful accents seemed to murmur, "Murder."
>
> *(3.3)*

Lillo is very bad, and not to be confounded with Johnson, Burke, and Gibbon. But the writing of these supreme stylists has just this much in common with the granulated prose of *The London Merchant*. It is not able, any more than the play is able, to grapple intellectually with the nature of man or man's business. The Augustans, at their best, are majestic nay-sayers and skeptics. Burke corroborates this description of them, in comparing his contemporaries with a more philosophic—which means, to him, a more foolish—people. Unlike the French, he says complacently, "We know that *we* have made no discoveries, and we think that no discoveries are to be made, in morality; nor many in the great principles of government, nor in the ideas of liberty, which were understood long before we were born, altogether as well as they will be after the grave has heaped its mould upon our presumption, and the silent tomb shall have imposed its law on our pert loquacity." Men of this aggressively humble sort, who identify discussion and investigation with pert loquacity, are unexcelled in drawing, or rather in announcing, the melancholy conclusion that history is "little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind"; or in framing strictures on the Revolution in France, which reveals to them that "History consists, for the greater part, of the miseries brought upon the world" by a congeries of abstract nouns, "by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy, ungoverned zeal, and all the train of disorderly appetites, which shake the public with the same 'troublous storms that toss/The private state, and render life unsweet.' "

That is fine in its way, but it is not so much in debt to cerebration as to vigorous assertion. The Augustans are by and large not notable for the sort of affirming which takes its rise from the worrying of particulars. Their affirmations, however powerful, are no more involved with intellect than are the memorable pieties of Isaac Watts. For that reason, they do not write discursive prose of real distinction. *Rasselas* is about the best they can do in that kind. (Comparison with the prose of Newman or Hobbes or Whitehead will make the point.) Their characteristic manner is declarative

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and apophthegmatic. Thus Burke, in a moving passage, remembers Marie Antoinette, "glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy." He had "thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult."

> But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

Johnson, refuting Berkeley by kicking the stone, dramatizes the peculiar virtues and infers the limitation of this coercive or enunciatory style. There is no reasoning with such a man, as when he observes, of the American colonists: "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging"; or, of the topography of Scotland, that there is not a tree between Edinburgh and the English border, older than himself—a statement which is more striking than either true or false.

But questions of truth and falsity are not really at issue. The wit is so trenchant, the rhetoric so overmastering, as to mock rational argument out of court. If one ventures to reply at all, he must reply in kind. But this is to give over (however cheerfully) the possibility of intellectual discourse. It is the same in the best poetry of Dryden and Pope, the greatness of which is not only independent of intellectual greatness, but rests on the willing suspension of intellect.

For there is this concurrent result of the repudiating of the investigatory method, that if some doors are closed, others are opened: if blank verse and kindred forms are enfeebled, other kinds of verse whose appeal is primarily to emotion, and whose viability is not therefore impaired by the disvaluing of the empirical way, are made more vital and more congenial, as witness the successful cultivating of tetrameters by Prior and Swift, and of

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the couplet by Dryden and Pope. In either case, in the negative as in the positive, it is the anti-intellectuality of Augustanism that governs. Alexander Pope is the heir to several generations of poets who have grown more and more impatient of analysis (the right employing of figurative language) as a means of ascertaining the truth. The bringing to perfection of the heroic couplet, the typical verse form of the Age of Reason, is a product of that impatience. The sustained figure, whose office is to explore, is given away: extreme compression becomes possible: a single value word in lieu of an extensive similitude. The gain is in immediate impact and also in suavity, the loss in real sophistication and ultimate conviction.

Keats fails in *Endymion* because his analytic temperament prevents him from handling the couplet, idiomatically. On the other hand, the poet who acquiesces in the limitations of that form can write more forcibly than ever before, but what he writes will not bear such close scrutiny as before: he has suppressed the proof, everything antecedent to his conclusion. Where Pope, managing a powerful antithesis, praises the virgin,

> How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot!
> The world forgetting, by the world forgot,
> *(Eloisa to Abelard)*

another poet, manipulating the value words, might write as powerfully in her dispraise:

> How hapless is the sullied Vestal's lot!
> The world forgetting, by the world forgot.

Sheffield, celebrating the triumph of Rationalism, an easy triumph by which

> plain Reason's Light
> Put such fantastick Forms to shameful Flight,
> ("On Mr. Hobbs, and His Writings")

is neither more nor less persuasive than Rochester, who scorns the reason:

> 'Tis this exalted Pow'r, whose Business lies
> In Nonsense and Impossibilities—
> *(A Satyr Against Mankind)*

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or Dryden, who exalts the Papacy in its stead:

> Then granting that unerring guide we want,
> That such there is you stand obliged to grant.
> (*The Hind and the Panther,* pt. II)

But the reader, if he takes counsel, is obliged to grant nothing. It is metric and rhetoric that make the conclusion.

One way for the poet to insure that his conclusion will not be disputed because it is uttered *ex cathedra* is to urge that the truth is easily come by, that all of us possess the seeds of judgment in our minds, that we do not need to range abroad, then, but only to look within. And that is, in fact, the Augustan way or resolution. Already the vanity of philosophizing had been suggested, in the philosopher demons of *Paradise Lost,* who found no end in wandering mazes lost (II.561). Now, the contempt for externals and for the finicking cerebration that occupies itself with them, a contempt proclaimed inferentially in the poetry of Milton but building long before, becomes an article of faith.

Burke, for instance, wants to know "What is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or medicine?" It is the discussing that is intolerable to him. "We know," he proclaims, "and what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort." Discussion is therefore gratuitous. Intuition supersedes it. But discussion is worse than gratuitous. The "professor of metaphysics" who indulges it, and whom Burke detests above all other persons, is not only useless but actively vicious, in that he is a propagator of error. His theories, "in proportion as they are metaphysically true . . . are morally and politically false. The rights of men are in a sort of *middle,* incapable of definition, but not impossible to be discerned." To play the game of metaphysical speculation is, first, to lose one's way and, last and worst, to involve mankind in chaos. "Massacre, torture, hanging!" This is the result of the Frenchman's loquacity. "These are your rights of men! These are the fruits of metaphysic declarations. . . !"

Dryden also sees no point in haggling over definitions. He is patently astonished that anyone could misconstrue the canons of the Church: "Their sense [is] so obvious, and their words so plain" (*Hind and the Panther,* II). Dryden does not concede that

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there are difficult questions; his unwillingness follows, to labor at working out answers. In his poetry, rhetoric stands for argument:

> Shall she command who has herself rebell'd?
> Is *Antichrist* by *Antichrist* expell'd?
>
> (II)

The poetry is aphoristic; it bears the look of cavilling and scrutinizing and close debate. Actually it is mostly courteous and of the surface; there is about it no grappling or probing, as in Shakespeare and Donne. The wit is a way of begging the question. Genuine argument, which is always empirical and *ad hoc,* which does not enunciate but investigates, is grudged. In its place, as a means of ascertaining what we want to know, Dryden relies on tradition. But if truth is not devious but open and manifest, it would appear to be superfluous, a waste of time and effort, and perhaps a source of error, to go to one's father or one's bishop to be instructed in the truth. Better and less circuitous to look in one's own heart. That is what the eighteenth century has taken to doing, well before it gives place to the nineteenth. In this manner Augustanism begets the Romantic age; and Dryden's and Pope's chariness of self reliance, the exalting of self reliance (a throwing of the reins on the horse's neck) in Emerson and Carlyle and D. H. Lawrence.

None of these writers sees any necessity for what the last of them called the fribbling intervention of mind. But if they are purblind, that condition is a legacy to them, bequeathed by their predecessors in the Age of Reason. Because Joseph Addison, like Gloucester in *King Lear,* needs no spectacles, he affirms that "Musick, Architecture, and Painting, as well as Poetry, and Oratory, are to deduce their Laws and Rules from the general Sense and Taste of Mankind" (*The Spectator,* no. 29). He has no thought that the framing of those laws and rules may require a niceness, a preciseness of mind, above the general sense and taste. It is exactly otherwise: subtlety, exility are snares. They do not catch the truth, either, but the subtle man himself, who falls like a woodcock in his own springe. That is why Dr. Johnson reprehends the Metaphysicals. In their zealous concern with "nicety of distinction," they seem ignorant of the fact that "great things cannot have escaped former observation" (*Life of Cowley*).

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The new kind of poet is not so ignorant. He knows better than to spend himself in making nice distinctions. He sees that people may differ on this minor issue or that; he fails to see how they could differ about right or wrong. Right is right, he says, with Stephen Undershaft in the play,

> Right is right; and wrong is wrong; and if a man cannot distinguish them properly, he is either a fool or a rascal.

The poet himself is neither, and yet he cannot distinguish: as he would put it, he cannot split hairs. Nor does he wish to. I suppose his contempt to have begot his incapacity. Abraham Cowley, a characteristic figure in the middle years of the seventeenth century, exhibits that contempt, and pays for it in the inferior quality of his verse. Ruminating "On the Death of Mr. Crashaw," he decides that religious differences are unimportant. Here, the expected word is "casuistry." That Crashaw was a Catholic signifies nothing, really (unless of course to the dead poet):

> For even in error sure no danger is
> When joined with so much piety as his.

It does not occur to Cowley to posit a relation between pious behavior and a faith that rests on lucid thinking.

> His faith perhaps in some nice tenets might
> Be wrong; his life, I'm sure, was in the right.

"Nice tenets" is good: men used to die rather than consent to their blurring. But now scrupulosity is taken for quibbling. Disputation is made a laughing matter, the sterile preoccupation of "subtle schoolmen." The phrase is Pope's, in *An Essay on Man* (II.81), and it is meant as a jibe because Pope also—curiously, given his Roman Catholicism—sees no utility in splitting hairs.

> For forms of Government let fools contest . . .
> For Modes of Faith let graceless zealots fight. . . .
> (III.303, 305)

Pope does not want to know how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. For that reason his poetry is intellectually shallow. Dryden, who anticipates him, does not want to know either, and with similar results.

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For priests of all religions are the same:
Of whatsoe'er descent their godhead be,
Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree.
(*Absalom and Achitophel,* 11.99-101)

To his cousin Swift, whose rude way with nice tenets marks him a true Augustan, the difference between High Church and Low, between Catholic and Protestant—in terms of *Gulliver's Travels,* between Tramecksan and Slamecksan, Big-Endian and Little-Endian—is the arbitrary difference between high and low heels. That is to say, it is nugatory. It does not matter how one breaks his egg—or worships, or apprehends, the Deity, or construes the Constitution. The supersubtle intelligence busies itself with straw-men. That is why the Lilliputians disown it. "In choosing persons for all employments, they have more regard to good morals than to great abilities." They do not need great abilities. "We preserve the whole of our feelings still native and entire, unsophisticated by pedantry and infidelity," says Burke, of his countrymen. Like Stephen Undershaft, age twenty-four, they may have no capacity for business, no knowledge of law, no sympathy with art, no pretension to philosophy; but they can tell you the difference between right and wrong. "They suppose truth, justice, temperance, and the like"—how cavalier, and how significant is that final phrase!—"to be in every man's power" (I.vi). Swift endorses the supposition. So does Burke. ("Political reason is a computing principle; adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, morally and not metaphysically. . . .") So does Henry Fielding. That is why he jeers at the intellectual pretensions of Squire Western's sister, in *Tom Jones.* He too is typically Augustan, is very much a product of what is miscalled the Age of Reason, in that he is convinced of the futility and even the perversity of intellectual discrimination. Like most of the Augustans, he is that sort of reasonable man whom you may know by his unwillingness ever to carry reason to extremes.

In consequence of his unwillingness, man in the Age of Reason grows myopic. At last even the synoptic view eludes him. For clear seeing is not achieved by getting up into the watch tower but by taking part in "A hundred controversies of an Ant."

The synthesizers, those who are forever straining their eyes to

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catch a glimpse of the Pisgah-sight, are not prone to attend much to the discrete stuff, the mere detail, of which their synthesis is compounded: they are not given enough to exercising the reason as they move from the definite article to the indefinite. But such exercise is the sinews of poetry as well as of political freedom. Omit to practice it, and the reason grows flabby; at last it is held in contempt as an instrument really able to do the job. Because Dryden has little faith in ratiocination, he does not accept conclusions that are forged in the mind: "For Fallacies in Universals live" (*Hind and the Panther,* II). But whoever visits contempt on the reason must exalt an alternative instrument: instinct, or political or religious dictation. Dryden is not hostile to conclusions so long as they emanate from some oracular and arbitrary source: "The church alone can certainly explain" (II). Thus it happens that the issue of Rationalism is a weakening of man's faith in reason.

Augustan poetry illustrates the paradox very well. It is written in the conviction, as Dr. Johnson expressed it, that

> Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness.
>
> *(Life of Cowley)*

It is Rationalism, the imperial insistence on generalizing, that engenders this aversion to minuteness and to "laboured particularities." The result of the aversion is an end to generalizing that is susceptible of proof; and the creating of a poetry in which emotion may be exploited but not reason. In Pope the discursive intelligence pretty much ceases to function. It cannot sustain itself on phantoms, on naked groves and rugged rocks and tinkling rills, on scornful virgins and ardent lovers and tyrants fierce. And so it dies of inanition.

This is not to say that, concurrent with its demise, man ceases to believe that he can know. On the contrary. Only now, in the disuse of the analytic intelligence, the naked truth is not going to be achieved, either deductively or inductively. Now the making of grandiose systems will be discountenanced just as much as the vulgar hocus-pocus of the mean empiric, fooling about with his stinks and cracked retorts. Now the truth is to be divined: the po-

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etry and philosophy of the Augustans. But the nature of what is divined, in the generalized epithets of Dryden and Pope, will be just as impalapable and subjective and imprecise as the intuited truths of the mystic.

Bacon, who sets the general truth above the particular instance, begins the denigrating of words as slippery counters. Locke follows him, a half century later, when, in the *Essay on Human Understanding,* he warns us not to bend our thoughts "more on words than things" (III.ii.7). Those who do so are like parrots; and so they fall into the errors of the Schoolmen. But Locke would have us fly past the nets of language, not because they conduce to systematizing, but because, given their stickiness, they make against it. But now Addison, only a little later still (1712), brings the process of denigration to its ultimate and sorry conclusion. Commencing his series of *Spectator* papers on *Paradise Lost,* Addison insists that "There is nothing in nature more irksome than general discourses, especially when they turn chiefly upon words" (No. 267, Sat., Jan. 5). That is not what Bacon meant, or Locke either; but the debasing of Baconianism to what is, in the eighteenth century, essentially anti-intellectualism, is inherent in the separating of intellect from the nutriment that sustains it: the fascination with particular things.

> God loves from Whole to Parts: but human soul
> Must rise from Individual to the Whole.

Swift in *Gulliver,* reviling the scientific projectors, which means to him: the empirics ("A Voyage to Laputa," ch. V), is very much of the party and in the original spirit of Bacon, the father of science, reviling the Scholastics, which means to him also, the empirics. So far so good. But Swift makes fun impartially, not only of "Aristotle" but also of "Plato." He derides the wordmongers; but then he derides those who, as in Laputa, would dispense with words altogether. To him the empiric is a fool; but then so is the synthesizer. "The learning of this people," he writes, in "A Voyage to Brobdingnag" (ch. VII)—and what he writes is meant of course to be inverted—

> The learning of this people is very defective, consisting only in morality, history, poetry, and mathematics, wherein they must be allowed to excel. But the last of these is wholly applied to what may

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> be useful in life, to the improvement of agriculture, and all mechanical arts; so that among us it would be little esteemed. And as to ideas, entities, abstractions, and transcendentals, I could never drive the least conception into their heads.

Baconianism, which begins with the idolatrous worship of reason, turns from reason, in the eighteenth century, as from a heathenish and so a discredited god. The putting away of the hull, the particular, in favor of the kernel, the general truth, is injurious by-and-by of one's capacity to grasp the general truth: the kind of intellectual pretension which is Rationalism leads at last to anti-intellectuality. An

> insatiate cormorant,
> *Consuming means . . . [it] preys upon itself.*

What is left is the original inspiration, Swift's criterion of "what may be useful in life." But the finding out of the useful is no longer the province of the experimenter or the metaphysician either. Now, it is necessary only to open one's shirt front and consult what is written within. The laws of the Brobdingnagians "are expressed in the most plain and simple terms, wherein those people are not mercurial enough to discover above one interpretation." Common sense will always arrive at that one interpretation, and all men are possessed ideally of common sense. For that reason the popular study of morality, without the intervention of priest or adept, is practicable: it has nothing to do with "ideas, entities, abstractions, and transcendentals." It is all open and shut. In this manner poetry, which Swift canonizes also, begins to find its way back as a subject fit for the perusal of practical men. If both the experimenter and the metaphysician are disqualified as detectors of the truth, and are displaced in that office by the man of intuitive wisdom, then the old objections to the poet, in any case to a kind of poet, fall away: he is able to intuit, to do the vaticinal thing, as well as anyone. Increasingly, that is what he does do, neither deduces nor investigates, but divines and proclaims.

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ANTHONY OSTROFF

In Puerto Vallarta

"Where is the In place . . .? It is Puerto Vallarta . . ."
—*Time*, Nov. 1, 1963

Upon a time the jaguars came
Nightly down the hill.
They prowled the town and looked
For human game.
Every door is still
locked
Where the natives live.
Tomorrow thirty jeeps arrive.
A taxi fleet to move the tourists
And be primitive.

When a jaguar took a child, it's said,
Both screamed.
Not a sound
Escaped the village.
Dead
Of night. South, the Olmec God
That killed wore a jaguar mask.
The tourists ask around: What's new?
Who's come to stay? Who sleeps
With whom?
The sun creeps
Across the waters and goes down.
The all-night light goes on in town.

And from this lisping coast
The Aztecs may have started out
To Mexico. Now breech clout
And gold brassiere
are surely here.
What's history but fiction?
The cancerous sun, the jaguar
Are time's most dark religion,

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But fun to know about.
We're all
Well-read. The tourists are
In love with fame
and watch for stars.
They swim
At "The Beach of the Dead."

Danger keeps to the hills.
They're building three new hotels
Along the beach.
The natives have to sell.
One by one they disappear.
The morning tide still whispers in.
The rich
Can buy a jaguar skin
For dollars. This is paradise.
Reality is here. Let us
Be true, My Dear.

Prices rise.

F. D. REEVE

Two Poems

Here on the dark side of Eden
the leaves kiss the moss of your breasts,
the bluejays shriek with the breath of autumn,
and the leaning sun shadows the fall;
the dusty alleys circle the trees
with snake-like confusion, persuading the species
that nothing will come of the evening breeze
but a longing for loneliness also tomorrow
when the chattering squirrels are back in charge.

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So it is ordered, one often supposes,
when habit falters and cities rage
against the condition their myths impose.
So lovers keep the seasons' difference:
the snow is as soft as a young girl's skin,
and birdsong in April calls with compassion
to the leaf-covered children bared by the wind.

*

The nights have various styles,
as also whores have tones and ways.
Professional lives fire up the dark.
I cannot tell you why
this pair of nylon-covered thighs
has more élan than those, but in the park
you feel the electricity
that canters down the path she goes.
Gerontic elms would shed their bark
and peel their senile eyes
like grapes to be as lush and hale
as that young alabaster-bellied shark
swimming through the trees
in chase of this blood-dripping tail.
A night of love leaves hexaglottic marks
which each invader tries
the divination of, but far
far off in the universal attic stark
realities inveigh
against the things you save.
Each night may have its style,
but dripping blood burns holes right through the day.

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STEWART L. UDALL

On Seeing a Photograph Of Citizen Khrushchev At An Art Exhibition (1965)

No longer master of the state,
A Lear look on his famous face
He knows the passing of all power
And rails within against his fate.

Once at the Black Sea in his prime
I heard him, eating with old friends,
Tell peasant jokes and, toasting peace,
Brandish the rockets of doom.

His land is altered; losers live,
(He didn't grind the faces of his foes)
Old men tarry to see uncertain sights,
And power that went before the grave.

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ROBIN MAGOWAN

Persian Notes

CERTAIN COUNTRIES, NO MATTER HOW FREQUENTLY VISITED, seem utterly unreal. Such was America before Tocqueville and such Persia today—the Persia of Chardin and Montesquieu—which sometimes goes by the name of Iran. What these countries have in common (besides remoteness) is their vagueness, a vagueness that ends by confounding all who would write about them. What is one to say about a country which is mostly desert and mountain-range, where there are few people, no women (at least no women with faces unveiled) and where to travel at all requires that one have in one's possession both a gas mask and a spare intestine. In the face of these difficulties the traveler does what he can. He visits the principal cities, all of them quite modern (their predecessors have been razed), and the important monuments, of which there are maybe five or six. He may even find a friend who has a car and with his help something of the old Persia, the Persia of the imagination, of travel-books and museums, will come through: a mosque here, its blue dome encircled by wind; a garden with battered mud walls and a pergola where he can walk with no one following pointing at him, and there are trees, two or three maples, and water, just the sound of it (water that is seen distracts, especially water with goldfish or lilies in it), and flowers which don't spell anything. And for a moment he is happy. Something has gotten through to him, pierced the mask. Not of course as it once was, but as a stray scent which in the time-vacuum of the Persian desert has miraculously been embalmed. And with the sense of an intuition confirmed he goes home, happy until some friend points out to him that, really, couldn't he have seen more of the essential Persia by spending an extra hour or two at the local museum, the one that had first given him the notion of going to such a far-off country, the country he has credited with the invention of paradise. So, at any rate, he has thought of it; a people so enamoured of the idea of beauty as to be utterly helpless before anything possessing it—a horse, or a twelve-year-old boy. To oblige his friend he goes to the museum and together they stand

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in front of the case of 12th century lustreware. There are many pots, hopelessly jammed one against the next, most of them of rather fine quality. And then he sees it, a pot with a blue almost violet ground, intense as the Persian sky itself, on which someone has painted a face round and smiling, a face like a bell whose black curves move outwards against the rim of the pot until they seem entirely to fill it, filling it to the brim, like a peach tree seen at the end of a long geranium-studded pool. It stands there in its arch, humble, its white blossoms perfectly still, like a friend who comes and with his smile completes your happiness.

Beauty is momentary in the mind (Wallace Stevens). Nowhere is this more true than in Persia where it is so frequently the *idea* of something that is impressive—the way, say, a garden is laid out, arranged as a place in which happiness is possible—rather than anything realized in bald mud and cypresses. The traveler who comes looking for a garden (it will have been marked on the tourist map issued by the local municipality) may find nothing there at all, the whole thing having dried up like the famous once visible rivers outside Shiraz. Like oil, a garden is something to be sensed, divined, an invitation of leaves extending out over high mud walls.

Looking for a garden he enlists himself on a tour which promises to take him through the whole of the city. (Its main street is known as the *chehar bagh,* and if there were forty gardens there once, there must be one or two left somewhere.) Well, he is wrong, there is nothing, only a pair of shaking minarets which provide a view of distant grape-colored mosques, and maybe two huge white storks nesting between the mud domes of an adjoining slum. At this point the traveler cannot afford to give up. He clambers back into his taxi and mutters another address, and after fifteen minutes driving the driver pulls up before what seems the usual assembly of mud and stones. A wicker gate opens and while the cab-driver waits you go in. The outside is modest enough, a pergola strewn with vine-leaves and wistaria not yet in bloom, where occasionally a student appears walking book in hand, memorizing his required verses. Other spaces disclose themselves: banks of grass into which gold, blue, and purple pansies have been sown with a richness that at first affronts and which one ends by ac-

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cepting, as one accepts an old lady's jewels; little fivesided pools bordered by a screen of cypresses and set off in turn by bleak potless terraces where a volley of jackdaws sits feasting, their color a jangle of gray and gold in the cold luminous March air.

The remainder presents what at first glance seems a hopeless crazy-quilt of quince, plum, peach, cherry, pear, pistachio; delicate maidenly ashes which rise white to a considerable height and then, all of a sudden, a hoop of green appears like a skirt held high over the head; and scattered everywhere the bright extravagance of the judas tree. All this is jumbled together pell-mell so as to create a profusion of color, the sense of the whole possible natural world being there, contained—in a word, plenitude.

Nothing is more foreign to the Persian imagination than the Western park with its huge shade-bearing trees each straddling its swath of lawn, parks which aren't gardens so much as cemeteries (think of the typical Southern park with its swamp-willows, sycamores, its cypresses which suggest death and only that, clumps of lilac, oaks that demand a swing, anything that would make it look less venerable, and finally the great American tree, the elm, eaten by weevils, termites, ants, woodpeckers, and now patched, held up by braces of wires with that over-corseted look of maiden aunts).

If it is shade the Persian wants, well, then he constructs it. With a bit of petrified earth he makes himself a bower, and there plants four or five maples to form a ring, or if he has the space a long rectangle. This he laces in turn with the sound of water, water flowing in a perpetual conversation. Along the water-channels he strews banks of narcissi and fat-mouthed irises, whose color is laughter, ebullience. If then he is able to induce a flock of nightingales to nest in an adjoining set of shrubs his happiness knows no bounds. He sits there with maybe some tea before him set on a silver tray, and on a carpet heaped-up bowls of oranges and black dates which he serves you himself smiling, never having seen you before, and knowing no words of any mutual language that would do in place of a smile.

In a country of mainly desert, where everything must be built of mud and smacks of impermanence, very little survives that has not been willed. These gardens are, thus, creations of the will; things like friendship for which there is no necessity, and like

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friendship only in the continued exertion of the will sustained. Perhaps tomorrow it won't be there, or something else will have intervened—an earthquake or a government confiscation. And the gardens you feel sense this. They would like nothing better than to turn themselves into carpets—the sort of carpet on which you ride away into nothingness, much as the Persian steps into a car and heads out into what is for him a vast undulating lake all breath, stars, and the tinkle of shattering glass.

The Persian, blank man that he is, surrounds himself with a rind of abstractions, different one from the next as that Noah's Ark which is *the* Persian garden is from the sexual squalor of the old-fashioned orange garden with its beds of marigold, its hornets and crows reposing upon squares of wet gleaming mud. In him they become a kind of music, rich and many-sided as a great family, and yet for all that chaotic as anything else in Persian life—without beginning, middle, or end because, essentially, without hope—a music which as one listens and becomes accustomed to it takes on the sadness of thought itself and that expanse of initial pain from which, vine-like, it must proceed. Unable to take comfort in a prospective future, without even a verb tense to express such a notion (in his language one doesn't say *I shall* but a much more modest *I wish to*), he is forced to sustain himself in a present that he tries to make as continuous as those endless flower-studded meadows in which the Persian of the minature sits. As we see him there, his face without outlines like a young child's, he is happy, sated, very near sleep. But unlike his Western counterpart who exists only in his anticipation, and must realize it all in the space of his lunch-hour (one is familiar with the scene afterwards, the frayed secretaries, the aspirin tablets!) everything here—the courtiers sitting under a distant peach tree tuning their lutes, the girl whose head dandles in his lap like a ripe bough—promises that love will continue. One knows that he will wake and wander forth, the paths opening before him, long vistas down which the hands move in a silence of years, of all that grows, while around him the sorrow-world of blossoms falls, their notes distinct as crystals. Under the spell of the music he has become a child drunk on its first legs for whom the blue of the sky is in itself a condition of hope. It is there, above him, so near as it settles on its frame of bare mustard-colored hills that he feels he can reach

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up with his hands and greet it, mouth bursting in a great pod-like grin.

If these dreamlike abstractions succeed it is only as miniature creations, absolutely private. They require of us that we become like little children. To see them otherwise, with the shrunken imaginations of adults, is to be deceived. For the traveller who insists on inhabiting a world that retains the scale of his earliest memories there is always Persepolis, a structure that dwarfs even those palaces of the Versailles-type, built to be seen from the back of a horse. In the first place the whole landscape surrounding it is outsized, made up of greenish-yellow hills that stretch away into the lowered sky like great shaggy camels, both sky and hills being of the same tone so that one can't tell where one leaves off and the other begins. Nearing it the haze thickens. The plain looks infinite. Then suddenly the palace bursts upon you, its great columns looming from their inflated platforms like the one and only palace in the one and only kingdom in existence. The situation of this great palace at the top of this immense and once extraordinarily fertile plain of Marvdasht is what impresses one. Beside it the glossy repetitive friezes with their processions of tireless Medes and Persians trouping one after another up the same set of stairs, the portals on which the same inevitable lion, its facial muscles contorted, is seen gnawing the same donkey—all this may strike one as rather overdone. The *gestures* involved are so stylized and self-assured that the spectator feels shut out, repelled, and if he allows himself to be so, humbled. Fortunately, though, the Persian has gotten over this, and in a shrunken world has gone on to create a culture that is human as his sense of flowers, any one of which can become for him a face.

At the end of a stretch of sand the provincial city appears. First the waterfront of trees, date-palms, ashes, poplars, tall blossoming fruit-trees, strung in an explosion of greens around the city and giving it the illusion of a garden; then maybe a bridge, its brick spanning what is now simply dry stones among which one occasionally finds a solitary jeep. This in turn gives way to the city itself with its rows of little rectangular mud-baked dwellings and criss-crossing powder-white streets winding on and on in an endless maze, like those tunnelled castles that children construct

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to roll marbles through: a jig-saw puzzle of holes and sudden luminous spaces out over which the blue of a mosque dome plays, much as fountains play in an Italian city.

To the Persian, the man of the desert, the city is paradise, paradise being that place where things grow. Since rain isn't something that falls every day, let alone every year (in Shiraz which is *the* garden-city it hasn't rained in over three years), this matter of growth may be illusory. Yet illusion or not it is one the Persian nevertheless believes in, and in acting upon it he transforms the city into a place where both he and his dreams can live. Thus whatever public revenue the governor-general's family is able to leave in the till goes into tree-planting and the construction of rotaries in the form of flower-clocks. Every shop has flowers calling attention to it, and the articles themselves are displayed as if they were flowers. And if by an act of grace a garden does exist—privately owned, true, and so remote from town as to be practically a phantom garden—it becomes a source of civic pride. Its seasonal progress is followed in the newspapers with an avidity reserved in other countries for the local football team. To be effective such a garden need not be large, perhaps no bigger than a rotary. In Yezd there is one of about this size set just beyond the East gate, containing an enormous statue of the late Shah Reza. Yet at sundown it seems that half the town is there, come to observe the flowers, much as one observes the skaters in Rockefeller center, while around the rim traffic swirls and the mountains glow.

The Persian one meets in a provincial city carries himself with the air of a man blessed. To be there, to be part of such a complicated existence, is happiness itself. A uniform not only satisfies him, it leaves him dazed, able to do nothing more than stand before a hall mirror lost in quiet self-absorption. You may find an entire hotel staff thus immobilized, napping on one of the great lengths of carpet. As you pass they spring to their feet, and begin combing themselves, brushing off each other's coats and trousers. Sometimes you wake in the morning and catch a glimpse of some impromptu wrestling. A maid-servant dressed in what looks like pyjamas (actually the national working dress) has her grip pitted around a man's neatly suited leg. His is around her waist. Both lurch back and forth across the courtyard to the music of playful screams and encouraging yells from the maitre d'. Otherwise the

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little courtyard is mostly deserted, with maybe a rectangular pool in the middle where the linen is taken and washed, and a few tall plane trees towering over the lateral wall, their white trunks gleaming against the violet-blue sky, the stillness broken occasionally by a stooped maid in white veil crossing, a copper basin on her head.

This personal narcissism also exists on ministerial levels, or so it seems to Western eyes. The suppliant who wants a service performed is shown into a little waiting-room. There he sits for maybe 15-20 minutes while his presence is announced and the minister prepares himself. The last silver lock in place (one has a glimpse of him putting the final touches to it as the secretary draws back the door), he receives you, a sweet ineffective smile playing over his lips, genuinely happy to be talking French (and so successfully, his syllables practically purr!). One quickly understands what strains one's request would put on his little staff. But one does come away admiring his blue suit, batiste shirt, and flowing silk tie, and that air so wonderfully maintained of a large refined mouse.

Of his women it is hard to speak. If they are at all like the little girls that one comes across in the bazaars they may well be the most beautiful creatures in the world. The trouble is that it all goes by in the space of a smile, and one has nothing afterwards to prove that what one has glimpsed wasn't another mirage. Those with actual certifiable faces are either tribes-women, quite dark-skinned and dressed in gowns of rose and saffron, their skirts fluffed by rows of multi-colored petticoats; or women who survive out of an archaic convention—like the harem type, wondrously plump, invariably clad in the same brown skirt and green lisle sweater, whose crossing of the street each morning at 10 was obviously one of the day's events. Men lined the curb and as she crossed slowly, deliberately, barely able to lift each foot, a hush would descend, and with it a kind of respect, as when one sees a swan trying to move on dry land.

With their glossy hair, definite brows, large eyes, Persian children are beautiful. They dart about the bazaar, smile, look serious, and charm as a butterfly charms. If they are girls their presence becomes especially important. For on their faces rides the whole otherwise invisible world of their sex. On the bus going between Kerman and Yezd one came upon a girl of the usual indetermi-

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nate age (somewhere between 8 and 11), with a high child's voice and yet the manner of a woman who has long been admired. Her props, besides her little girl's printed frock and leggins, were a pair of tiny gold earrings and a mop of henna-tinged hair. To the men on the bus she was child, sister, and prospective mistress all at once. They tussled with her, held her on their laps while they teased her and fed her little bits of chicken, all to the mixed discomfit and pleasure of her equally beautiful but subdued (and veiled) mother. One felt that forty years earlier a sultan seeing such a prize would have had her clapped into his harem and left there to ripen.

City life is hard to judge. First because there are many places where one is simply not welcome. If one does go in one has to proceed hurriedly, not lingering before any one object for fear the inevitable crowd will collect, and hoping that later on what one has so briefly glimpsed will come back, expanded by a chance observation. If the life is there it is like a manuscript in a public case, its illuminated page (chosen how? out of what whim?) shining up at you from under its foot of glass. Moreover, it is hard to remain objective (and by this one means human) when everyone insists on regarding you as so much moving revenue. And woe to the Persian who lets his chance of assisting the national economy pass by! As soon as the taxi-cab has departed each mendicant presents himself. He twitches, capers about on whatever limbs he has, and if sufficiently inspired composes a poem about you which he chants in a deliciously high voice to the merriment of his fellow fleas. So the traveler who wishes to see anything must stand there, holding his hourly auditions, occasionally rewarding one of the more promising with a coin, who takes it without a smile, a bow even, regarding it quite matter-of-factly as his due, to be subjected to a cool scrutiny, and if below expectations on the spot returned.

What one does perceive is the complexity of the life itself, as abstract and untranslatable as Persian poetry, that onion-skin of endlessly overlapping allusion and verbal association. Pare this away, and one will find nothing, the void of the ordinary desert existence. Thus the smallest of operations, such as buying a dozen carnations, or getting a pair of shoes shined, take on a complexity that makes the Western dentist with his 7 drills and white and

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rosy sprays seem like a novice. One would think that buying a few flowers is something easily dispatched. No, the vendor must bring out his whole stock, the two of you pore through the lot, until at the end of, say, a quarter of an hour twelve mutually satisfactory stalks have been assembled. Each of these must then be wrapped first in a fern leaf, then in a strip of expensive newspaper. The whole thing is tied together (you are offered your choice of ribbon and colored paper). You pay (another long ceremony in which he goes out into the street, as complicated in its way as a stock-exchange transaction), bless each other and leave. And later your friends agree that the flowers *are* beautiful. What keeps the operation from being simply time-consuming is the mutual involvement that the succession of gestures in themselves enforce. By means of them buyer and seller are taken out of themselves and released so that they begin acting for each other. In the midst of having your shoes shined (a 40 minute operation, he takes off the shoes, removes the laces, places a piece of newspaper under each foot, and with a fruit-knife begins to scrape away the mud; this done the first of the three coats of wax is applied, the cobbler preceding each application by searing the wax in his little brazier, like a baseball pitcher going to the rosin), he gets up and goes into his back room, opens a drawer to emerge after a minute or so with a single cigarette that he offers with a grace and thoughtfulness that only the truly poor seem able to muster.

The culmination of this life of mutual respect is the *zurkhana*. One finds it in a back street, unpretentious, with a bench set aside for spectators, and a small hollowed-out pit where men dressed in red plaid loincloths (worn hitched in at the middle, then let out over the buttocks in a series of folds) assemble in the evening to exercise. Presiding over them from a raised platform is the owner, a huge figure in blue tights and white T-shirt. While they exercise he accompanies them on his two drums and chants verses from the *Shahnameh* (interspersed with ejaculations, prayers to Ali, etc.). Imagine Americans working out to Walt Whitman! After a series of initial exercises each picks up in turn a little javelin, and holding it out at arm's length begins to twirl, going faster and faster to the constant acceleration of the drums until the circles under him come apart and he has to be caught (after which he hops around on one foot on the edge of the ring while the next

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performer spins). The final feat involves the throwing of a club the size of a man's leg. The performer must juggle it (with others naturally), and then when he has finally gained control over it throw it up end over end so that he can catch it hands behind his back. Obviously few succeed, but somehow that doesn't any longer matter. What counts is that he has thrown it and not been brained, that he has enlarged his fund of courage.

In the midst of this medley of elaborately sustained illusion which is the Persian city the mosque appears immensely real—the desert itself reincarnated within walls of tile. Abstract, terribly severe, sometimes with its inner domes composed of just strands of interlocking brickwork mounting one over the next, it has still a delicacy about it that makes the pencil-and-inkset domes of Istanbul look beside it like railroad stations.

The center, the celebrated *iwan,* is simply a bare gleaming void, a desert in which for once there is water, perhaps the merest trickle for the hands, but enough to give a suggestion of holiness. At the ends, like a distant enchantment, stand the panels of blue tile, mirages in their way no different from those that the desert sky itself imposes. As one approaches forms emerge, large floral scrolls threaded with white, a labyrinth of blues punctured here and there by a bit of orange or green or scarlet so as to form gardens of tiny trellised stars. Hanging above it in a blaze of tile is the design of the great dome itself, which, as the sun strikes it, expands and becomes a white flowing river in which all earthly life is summoned up and in that moment contained. What keeps the design from disintegrating under its own luxuriance (as in a similarly sensual Indian art) is the respect that the Persian as a Moslem has in the unity of creation. Thus, first place in the hierarchy of design goes not to the swelling volume of the dome but to the band of narrow gilt Kufic encircling it and proclaiming it part of a natural order conceived in the imagination by a unique Creator.

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VERNON YOUNG

Films from the Perimeter

IN FIFTY YEARS THERE WILL BE NO LOST TRIBES, no vanishing clans, no unspoiled agricultural peoples, no autonomous Andean Indians or oceanic islanders weaving cloth and dancing to invoke the approval of unseen powers. Today, every film that embodies ethnic values has won a territory against the near future, when human variety will be a phenomenon which only students of anthropology or history will be permitted to recall.

Pour La Suite du Monde is such a film, though I hasten to add that it does not come under the heading of *exotica*. Produced for the Canadian Film Board, it concerns the relatively uneventful lives of a fishing community, located somewhere in the terraqueous reaches of the St. Lawrence, known as L'Isle-aux-Coudres. A few years ago the inhabitants of this island were offered $500 from an American aquarium for a large white tuna, to be delivered alive. Since tuna-fishing was a tradition long since abandoned by the village, the economic proposition involved them in months of debate, speculation, research and finally preparation. Overlapping this period two young French Canadians, Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault, spent a year and a half making the film. In so doing they defined the daily life of a rural community as, on film, no one has ever done to my recollection. Twenty years ago Georges Rouquier set himself a comparable task and spent about the same length of time with a peasant family in the heart of France. The product was *Farrebique* (1946), to my sense one of the more boring among many earnestly made films on which the term "classic" has been bestowed by surveyors of film history (Visconti's *La Terra Trema* is another). And it's useless to argue that the life of the St. Lawrence islanders is more susceptible to cinema than that of Rouquier's farmers. You find poetry in the fact, as the admirable Grierson used to insist, yet I'm not sure he didn't understate the importance of there being a poet on hand to find it. But roots he never undervalued. Perrault and Brault have roots in French film-making and Perrault has roots in the island (he's married to a native of Coudres): they were thus, perhaps, less self-conscious than Rouquier in their scrutiny.

This much and little more I know about the directors. What more there is to know can be inferred from the film, itself, wherein the moments that do not directly contribute to the decoy subject (the trapping of the tuna) are just those through which the film lives. If you try following the scenario as a straight-line chronology you will miss what's really shaping up: what the people believe, of what their

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daily elations consist, how they work, how they divert themselves. In all this, as a life-way, there's nothing spectacular. The villagers of L'Isle-aux-Coudres look as if they'd been left by the tide. No doubt their ancestors were. To the disengaged eye, their immediate surroundings are no different from those of a hundred back-country places one has been in and couldn't get out of quickly enough—whether they were in Oregon, Central Sweden or Bavaria. With a difference that's especially striking when compared with Rouquier's microcosm in *Farrebique:* these people are happy! As I recall, the peasants in the earlier film did little more than grunt at each other as they sat down to their potato soup, and there was no music in their lives save a once-a-month jig in a bare tavern, whereat the men danced joylessly with each other! In Coudres life is relationship and exchange and it moves to the artless accompaniment of fife, fiddle and concertina. The oldest generation quote from the Bible and harangue their juniors from the log-book of Jacques Cartier; the younger ancients dispute them and cheerfully insult each other in a peculiar patois of French probably surviving from the Renaissance period. They are, in short, expressive: they're provincial in the purest sense but they are not lacking in articulate philosophies, and a trace of civilisation—i.e. of the civil—lingers in their smiles and in their gestures.

Perrault's method is basically that of *cinéma vérité* but he's not impeded by it: unlike Jean Rouch he is not at pains to let the subject film itself. For yards of time he may confront some old gaffer still full of life-juices and Gallic gesticulations, while he talks and talks and talks. Then abruptly, as if the camera had independently protested and run away to pick flowers, he cuts from the argument or whatever it may be, into the more pointless and artistic flourishes of existence, often retaining a musical rhythm from the scene deserted, as he follows a jog-trotting timber sled or a bouncing rowboat. The trajectory is almost diametrically distinct from that of Vittorio De Seta who, intent on similar material, plunges into a group action already in crescendo, sustains a driving pace without looking to right or left, then terminates the whole thing just before it all settles down and levels out. The settling down and leveling out is part of Perrault's music: this is a difficult mode of composition, achieved principally, I would guess, during the editing stage, and this entails, of necessity, the shooting of much more material than you have running time for. A fact film, especially, since it can't be shaped in advance, must get back from its edited footage the life it intermittently recorded, but with fresh relationships. If report is correct, Perrault's ratio—about three to one—was not exceptionally high: the more to his credit that the resulting continuity feels inevitable without seeming calculated.

Nobody Waved Goodbye is quite another matter. This is quite another Canada, where a tuna fish, far from being as eventful in community history as a flood or a crime, is merely something that comes

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in a tin. *Pour la Suite du Monde* isn't really about Canada; it's about L'Isle-aux-Coudres. Perault wants to show you something; Don Owen, an English Canadian, wants to tell you something. He wants to tell you what you already know, but he tells you with such a disingenuous, bright-eyed method, for the most part, that you don't at all mind listening. What he has to say, through the story of a mutinous adolescent, too intelligent too soon, is that urban Canada, no less than any other progressive country where the nerve has been removed and the cavity root-packed, is bored to extinction by the materialism it has willed—and defensively complacent about its boredom. The film owes so much to those high-minded American T.V. dramas we've been seeing on sundry social problems—drily reasonable and unhistrionic, with all sides having their innings—that it comes as a pleasurable shock to realize that the probable model was *The 400 Blows*: with all the crucial differences which, apart from the central fact that Peter Kastner is older (yet newer) than Pierre Leaudy, may as well be accounted for by the distance between Paris and Toronto.

In any case, the pattern is almost identical. Peter, like Pierre, alienated from his family (and in this case from his girl), is led to the brink of crime; not so much from neglect, however, as from his impatient disgust with the only social aspirations offered him as desirable. Apparently Owen let his actors improvise their dialogue, after giving them the situation, and this is a hazard over which a director can damn well struggle without my sympathy. I could have done with two-thirds less dialogue and far fewer closeups not only of Mother, whose voice was too authentically desiccated for my shell-like ear to withstand, but also of Peter's "girl," who deserved to be abandoned for not having once combed her hair. To be sure, Owen rescued some wonderfully disarming moments from this unaffected treatment, but since he had too much conscience to remain dependent on reality unadorned, his film increasingly became an uncertain compromise between the lifelike and the suavely cinematic. Even so, underneath the public-prosecutor message of *Nobody Waved Goodbye,* "It's easier to steal than to think constructively," there drums the unanswerable—"It's better to steal than to be a stalled ox," and this is an unexpected motif to emerge from the long tradition of tedium maintained by Canadian Film Board documentary. Owen, and others with whom he is associated, herald a new outlook from that brand-new sector of filmmaking, in which heretofore Norman Maclaren has been the single bright anomaly. I might mention in passing that Owen has even more confidence when out of this world, if I may judge from an engrossing short film he made called simply *Universe* (except for some streaming nebulae, it had an all-star cast?). I don't know how astronomers rate its contribution to the field but as film poetry it's superlative.

Set it down in the good book: everything else being equal (an economic foundation and a visual tradition), countries with the

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highest proportion of cultural lag make the most vivid films. Japan, for instance—where timeless occupations linger in fact and where atrocious historical codes survive as subjects for art because their kinetic power is irresistible. For some years I have treasured among my favorite documentaries a half-hour film made in a mountain wilderness that observed, with fitting reverence, a season in the life of an old man (the last of his breed) who catches and trains falcons (for whose use I have no idea). And recently I have seen *Seppuku* (or *Harakiri*), a generously full-length film which I found sympathetic for some of the same reasons. It also celebrates a vanished dedication; insofar as we are speaking of the physical subject, self-disembowelling, one that is not likely to arouse nostalgia in anyone known to me. The essential terms of the film are familiar to us: death before dishonor, or rather, death to wipe out an attributed dishonor. Hanshiro, a *ronin* who has been discarded in the shuffle that has established a new shogunate, must die by *harakiri* if he is refused service as a samurai. Two and a half hours of relentlessly inhibited narration are occupied with a foregone conclusion. Since it is disclosed, or alleged, that his son-in-law died disgracefully, Hanshiro (played with something like demonic self-possession by Yasuhiko Takiguchi) is on hand not only to perform the definitive act himself but to recite the unspeakable truth of the matter concealed by his "host."

Such subjects in Japanese film give every sign of surviving the most violent social changes. To what extent they are relished for their ethical content by the Japanese themselves, only an informed witness (Donald Richie, for example) would know. For us (meaning those who share my impaled consent to the genre) the appeal is that of style, which means much more than the salient formality of the settings and the theatrical vehemence of the action. Style here is the outward expression of the concept that man is authentic to the degree that he accepts the circumstances of his fate and vindicates the cruelty of them by undergoing the rituals ordained for transcending their futility. That this is the very opposite of a "modern" attitude, East or West today, has obviously not diminished its fascination for a sizeable number of people who are surely as averse as I (more they couldn't be) to the notion of cold steel voluntarily planted in the belly. The beauty of the samurai tradition, like others of its historical kind, lay in its artful simplicity: the unshakeable laws of conduct were the moral equivalents of the ceremonious prescriptions for debate and for duelling; like these they derived their force of character from the tension that constrained them. We might describe the whole tradition as an unusually dynamic expression of what we call classicism—while everything is known, thematic variations are infinitely possible.

Much of this compact alliance of tensions has been preserved in Masaki Kobayashi's direction of *Seppuku*. The pace is calculated to

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extract every ounce of suspense; the flashbacks and supplementary actions are timed with sadistic precision to interfere with the forthright development of the main event. As a whole it is more successful in these terms, and has a more expressionist accent, than Kurasawa's *The Throne of Blood, Sanjuro* and *Yojimbo.* No small part of the conviction is assisted by the fact that early in the film we are made to witness the actual *harakiri* (or as much of it as can be contrived and most of us can bear) of a previous victim. As in *The Forty-Seven Ronin,* which has been filmed a half-dozen times, the whole pent-up force is released with orgastic ferocity in the last fifteen minutes of film, a dependable convention that taxes the inventive wits of the director. . . . Among unexpected consequences of my seeing this film, I found that it reduced to virtual nonsense a favorite aphorism from the late Aldous Huxley. "One culture gives us the pyramids, another the Escorial, a third, Forest Lawn. But the act of dying remains always and everywhere identical." If Mr. Huxley now inhabits a world where time is more plastic than even he supposed, he may be in a position to submit this conclusion to a number of fellow-shades. And somewhere there must be a samurai who died trying to gouge his insides out with a bamboo sword because he had sold his own more effective weapon.

The act of dying, in all its variety, is a subject too omnipresent, in any case, to be repudiated by film-makers. And death by violence is as universal a language as love. Surprisingly, a group of Cuban films I saw not long ago was comparatively temperate if you consider the normally high saturation in bloodshed of movies made in Latin America, whether in Brazil, Argentina or Mexico. From four programs of Cuban film I can't indulge a rage for prophecy. I'm not even sure there's anything of great cinematic moment going on today. I hope there may be, for the reasons I set down earlier. All I know is that the Castro regime has been supporting film production and has imported European cinematographers to instruct the first Cuban contingent. The advantage of a revolution, to the film-maker who shares its goals, is self-evident: it gives him basic physical situations, ideological simplicities, quickly reducible choices. It faces life with death and this is a *sine qua non* of drama. Two of these films, both multiepisodic, dealt with allegedly factual material gleaned from the last days of the Batista regime: *Stories of the Revolution* and *Cuba 58.* They centered on such questions as: Should you exploit a bourgeois girl friend by asking her to conceal hand grenades in her skirt so that you can blow up a building in the name of the revolution? If a guerrilla comrade is dying in the jungle, do you stop him from blowing out his own insides with a gun? What happens to cops when the regime they have been serving with willing brutality is overthrown? The execution of these and some short documentary items was predictably uneven but all in all there was an unmistakable tang of sincerity that led one to feel

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encouraged about the possibility of a new film-making frontier. Yet our hopes are understandably discolored by skepticism. The very notion of Castro sponsoring films dedicated to liberty seems a dirty joke to most of us, but the irony has wider application. All regimes instigated by revolution administer the kiss of death. After the first vital flurry of approved subjects, the film-maker (novelist or whoever) is faced with the problem of analytically expressing the resumed life instead of recapitulating the hour of glorious upheaval. Then, if he suggests that individual problems remain, which the State hasn't solved, and which can't even be shared by the new community, the knife comes down. We have seen the effects of this conditioning in Soviet Russia and, with variable degree, in every satellite country. Our interest in Polish film producers, sustained through many disappointments, is sharpened by our sympathy with their desperate hunt to find unequivocal subject matter in the grey environment of a post-revolution society.

Yugoslavia is signed, sealed and delivered. I went to see *Skopje 63* on the not unfounded assumption that since it was the record of a tragedy—the razing of a town by earthquake—essential emotions would be visibly revealed: the emotions of survival, in which shock, gratitude and grief are blended. I escaped unscathed. Despite the numerous closeups of wreckage, the wailing, the stunned faces, the soup-lines, the rigging of tents for the temporary housing of the survivors while a cloudburst harried their already tormented lives—despite all this I felt as deeply untouched, if as decently sympathetic, as one does in a newsreel when you're trying to suffer vicariously for the victims of a mine disaster, ten seconds after leaving the Paris mannequins revolving like lighthouses for an overhead shot to show off the season's new hats. When I told some friends of mine that the film had left me unmoved, their look asked me plainly, "What did you expect? Blood?" I suppose I did, in a manner of speaking. I expected something authentic and what is more authentic than sorrow? But to deduce it is not enough; I can't be expected to make my own movie from the hints of a movie someone else didn't make. The fact is that we have long since passed the stage when any full-length documentary is bewitching because it's "real." We do expect something close to art; we demand the results of an inquisitorial eye, we are accustomed to electrifying closeups and adroit editing, we wait for the unpredictable reactions of people caught off guard. To exploit disaster effectively—and if that wasn't the point here, what was it?—takes more than reverence. I am convinced that if Perrault, Vittorio De Seta or Frederic Rosif (who managed that fabulous re-creation of the Spanish Civil War, *To Die in Madrid*) had been assigned to the ruins of Skopje, any one of them would have brought back a potently disturbing film.

However, the failure (as I see it) of *Skopje 63* can't simply be accounted for by alleging insensitivity to the director. The insufficiency

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was guaranteed by the conditions of Yugoslav film-making. According to a report published a few years back by Donald Richie (in *Film Quarterly*), the procedure of getting a scenario accepted and produced is comparable to that of labor-management negotiations in certain countries we're familiar with. The recommendation is passed on from one Peoples' Committee to another. Naturally the writer shares the common assumptions or his script would never get beyond the first committee. This is no doubt considered a democratic process, and therein lies the clue to what happened at Skopje—and to what didn't happen! They made a movie and submitted its content to arbitration. The film begins with its director introducing to the people the footage he shot—presumably the film one is seeing thereafter; it ends with his soliciting a referendum from the audience. Do they approve? Do they have any complaints? Have they suggestions to make? I don't dispute the right of people to have their privacy respected (a paradoxical sentiment in countries where everyone is owned by everyone else, anyway) but if that was really the issue why try to make a movie in the first place? The belief that you can create film by the same method with which you settle a strike is one of the exemplary stupidities of the socialist mind.

In other countries, besides those collectivized, film-makers often have to beat their thickets to flush a subject, the difference being that if they find one their chances of expressing it are not so hopeless; their problems are likely to be temperamental rather than political. The Swedish, with no social ferment, little ethnic variety, no photogenic minorities and no moment of national danger to recall, are forced to dig deeply into what exigent conflicts they have or to look for trouble elsewhere. This is why Swedish films mostly seem so *willed,* so gratuitously intent on finding pain or working up joy. There's little point in begging this question; that's the way they make film and if it's the hard way it can't be said not to yield results. Against the films of Bo Widberg and Mai Zetterling, which have most caught international attention this year—films that to my sense illustrate strenuously this primacy of the will—I'd like to urge a different example of Swedish film art, the more gratifying for its breakaway from the vitreous pictorialism and from the cold bite of anxiety that dominate the Swedish cinema. Arne Sucksdorff's film, *My Home is Copacabana,* is one of the purest victories won by poetry from sociology that I've seen in some time. Growing organically from Sucksdorff's deepening intimacy with a handful (among thousands) of Rio de Janeiro's homeless boys—they live by their wild wits, always within fearful distance of the law—and made in the teeth of seriously interfering conditions, it is so inconceivably balanced between what I know to be actual and what appears to be too alive to be "true" that long after seeing it I was in a mood of delight shot through with disbelief. This is a work of quite extraordinary veracity, astoundingly free from special pleading and

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from the easy ingratiations of dialectic. It sings all the way, soaring above the prose of implicit misery like the dancing kite with which the film opens. But that kite is tethered to the guiding hand of one small boy, a creature of infinite jest and unquenchable vitality. Sucksdorff (with his camera always attentive and rarely at rest) never deserts that boy and his three co-urchins as they play, fight, beg, shoeshine, steal and, above all, fantasize. He worked with these youngsters for eight months before he ever focussed a lens on them: the "trained spontaneity" he elicited by so doing, in order to re-enact their plucky, desperate and instinctively histrionic lives is a miracle of effort concealed. Most remarkably, he never takes up an attitude towards them and never stops to stress what is sufficiently obvious—the big, luxurious, indifferent city waiting to certify them as criminals and grind them up. Rio is always there, far below the scrappy, picturesque heights where the boys live (in an aloof wasteland of tropical scrub and vulture-tended garbage) or curving away into a scenic fugue of beach and massed luxury hotels.

Always the craftsman—his editing of the film is as nimble as his cinematography—Sucksdorff has regained the unfaltering instinct that made him a master of the animal and bird world in the films he produced between 1943 and 1953. The fundamental purity of that instinct, informing every passage of *My Home is Copacabana,* is expressed with final and subtle authority in his ending of the film. Misfortune is surrendering one of the boys to voluntary captivity and at this concentratedly painful moment Sucksdorff's decision to keep the scene at distance, observed from above, is as inspired in its own way as Truffaut's in his, when he brought his equivocal young fugitive into importunate closeup.

CHARLES HIGHAM

Grasping the Nettle: the Films of Andrzej Wajda

ANDRZEJ WAJDA HAS ONLY MADE A HANDFUL OF FILMS, not all of them good; yet already he is safely among the modern masters. The one director in the Polish cinema whose work one can study as a whole, he is, so far as one can see, its only romantic poet; his style—sombre, stark, elaborately symbolic, often laden with baroque decoration—exists to

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expose the dark passions of his heroes and their hopeless courage. In *A Generation* the style was bare, stripped of inessentials, but the unmistakable rhetorical utterance was there in the scenes of a youth's first taste of war and love and his awakening to manhood, to the burden of leadership in a revolutionary group in the Warsaw of World War II. In *Kanal* the journey of a band of men and women through the city's sewers to death becomes a symbol of man's journey through the hell of life to a final darkness lit only temporarily by the flame of his courage. In *Ashes and Diamonds* a young hero is torn between the call of youthful pleasure, the appeal of security, the conscience of the life-lover and the need to obey his superiors' orders to kill. And in *Samson* a Jew has the agonizing choice of facing a world that has rejected his race or going back into the ghetto to obtain his Samson's strength at the price of self-immolation.

Major themes and, in a cynical and hedonistic age, unfashionably difficult ones; but Wajda has never shirked important issues, and even in his most relaxed film, *Innocent Sorcerers,* he makes his attitude to life sharply clear. In the original version he planned, his youthful protagonists Andrzej and Magda—casual lovers in peacetime Warsaw—lose their chance of happiness because their sophistication and smartness kill their budding passion for each other. For Wajda, only a wholehearted acceptance of life, a firm grasping of the nettle, renders men noble; withdrawal means a spiritual failure far worse than death.

The emphasis on courage, youth, physical strength and aspiration blazing like solitary beacons in the night of the world—this is at the centre of the lyrical-romantic Polish literary tradition. Mickiewicz, Stowacki—these poets with their powerfully evocative imagery, their hymns or elegies to the proud youth of Poland dead in war or revolution, are the spiritual godfathers of Wajda and of the late Andrzej Munk. And it is not too much to say that, like Mickiewicz, Wajda has been the voice of Poland crying in its agony, as well as a worthy singer of its eternal songs of freedom.

Born in 1926, Wajda was a member of a Resistance Unit in 1942, the year in which *A Generation* is set; after the war he worked as an art student and in 1950 joined the Lotz Film School, where he made three shorts; the best of these, *When You Sleep,* was a strongly individual evocation of the lives of workers on a night-shift. In 1952, he worked at the Lotz Studios under Aleksander Ford; his first film, *A Generation* (1954), was deeply influenced by Ford's style.

The film opens with three youths, vagabondish and uncertain of their political direction, playing at war; only one, Stach (Tadeusz Lomnicki) survives to wage it in deadly earnest. The script traces his development into manhood, into a realisation of the virtues of the workers' struggle. Joining a carpentry shop as an apprentice, he learns the strengths that can exist in a unit of laborers, and he also discovers himself sexually, falling in love with Dorota, the leader of an emergent communist youth group. Dorota, with her fiercely committed

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nationalism and sense of pride, inspires Stach to a sense of his heroic destiny. When she is arrested by the Nazis, Stach makes a final step into maturity: he takes over the leadership from her. At the end of the film, when new fledglings arrive to take up the standard against the enemy, Stach is prepared to lead them; he has already become a veteran.

Disciplined and stark, *A Generation* has the fierce lyrical intensity of a Mickiewicz poem. Based on a novel by Bodan Czesko (who also worked on the script) it stands in the mainstream of the Polish artistic tradition: it celebrates youth and beauty and courage, the struggle of the emergent warrior to conquer his fears, the final bursting into flower of manhood and strength. And in a sense, Wajda's personality is undergoing a similar purifying process in the development of the film; one can sense a determined attempt to spare himself nothing of his memories of 1942, of his thoughts of people and things seen, loved and lost. The austerity of the images—beautifully realized by the cameraman, Jerzy Lipman—never falters; the editing is almost cruelly tight and sharp; and Tadeusz Lomnicki's Stach—healthily boisterous at the beginning, fighting against fear and hedonistic impulses of youth, screwing himself up to a pitch of strength and resilience—is one of the screen's great portraits.

A Generation remains Wajda's purest, most stripped and disciplined film. And its few moments of emotion—notably when Dorota is arrested, and Stach breaks into a sudden agony of grief—are all the more disturbing because of the tight-lipped sternness of the rest. In *Kanal* (1957), Wajda's style is already becoming more rhetorical, more baroque; nevertheless this, too, remains a powerfully haunting and beautiful film, and its technical skill shows a rapidly maturing grasp of the medium. Based on a novel by Jerzy Stawinski, an officer of the underground who also wrote autobiographically in *Eroica, Kanal* opens in a 1944 revolutionary Warsaw reeling in its most crushing defeat. The eager young men of *A Generation,* awakening to the challenge of war, are now a pack of hunted and desperate veterans, their bodies starved and their faces ravaged with disillusion. The film opens with a grim evocation of the city under its coal-black sky: flame throwers fountaining against crumbling, grime-encrusted buildings, people running, an abandoned bath. In a besieged building, a group of survivors—43 men and women—of a shattered platoon receive retreat orders: through the network of underground sewers they must make their way to a freedom they know in their hearts can only be achieved in death.

One by one, the characters are introduced; among them a blonde Viking-woman, Halinka, and her officer lover; a musician with a potato-flute; a stern commander, Zadra. In silence, they descend into what appears to be the pit of hell (and this is rather heavily underlined in some later comments by the musician, a kind of chorus to the action). Amid swirling trash and excrement, they make their way through the labyrinth; some try to escape through manholes but are trapped; the musician goes insane; Halinka, after her lover shows her

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the picture of his wife and children, shoots herself; finally Zadra, believing his sergeant has betrayed some of the others, murders him.

The film is flawed by an over-literary style, which may have stemmed from the original novel: wandering off for the last time, the musician cries: "Dante has been here before us . . . this is the Inferno and all creatures are doomed." The blonde heroine is a wholly Wagnerian figure, passionate in grief, destroying herself for love; and the heavy-handed irony of the sequence (praised by some critics) when the escaping soldier, after successfully dismantling a booby-trap, is blown to pieces by accidentally tripping over it, is altogether too theatrical in its context. But despite these faults, the film succeeds powerfully, chiefly through its extraordinary emotional intensity, the superb recreation of the Warsaw sewers by Roman Mann, and the striking, Teutonic, occasionally too arty but magnificent lighting of (again) Jerzy Lipman.

With *Ashes and Diamonds,* the third part of the trilogy (1958), Wajda emerged in the full romantic colors. The austere style of *A Generation* gives way completely to a dynamic virtuoso flair seldom found outside the American cinema. The film is—simply on the technical level—Wajda's most breathtaking achievement, its visuals and soundtrack orchestrated with triumphant skill, its central performance by Zbygniew Cybulski the most powerful in the Wajda repertoire.

Ashes and Diamonds takes place on the day immediately after the war; the passionate idealists of the trilogy's first section and the tragic fatalists of the second have given way to the bitter, edged, sophisticated men of a new world. The scene shifts, for the first time, outside Warsaw: in a provincial town, Maciek (Cybulski) arrives to assassinate a Communist District Secretary, staying at a huge and hideous local hotel. Maciek moves into a room next to that of his prospective victim; celebrations are going on for the end of the war; and despite the sternness of his mission, Maciek still, and movingly, is young. He makes love to the hotel barmaid, Christine (beautifully played by Ewa Krzyzanowska), and sees what his life could be away from the tension and struggle of serving a political cause. While the District Secretary carouses downstairs, Maciek is torn by an agony of indecision: it dawns on him that the war is over; that the fight between warring factions in the new world is going to be self-destructive of Poland; that anyway he wants to live in peace and enjoy his youth; what is he doing in this town, waiting to kill a man he has never met? But his companion, Andrzej, compels him to go ahead with the killing; Maciek shoots the Secretary in the street and the man, dying, falls into his arms while fireworks explode (with rather too emphatic an irony) into the sky. At the end, Maciek is killed by a military patrol.

The film is full of extraordinary and celebrated images: Maciek and his companion drawing up the tray of vodka glasses in the bar, setting light to them one by one, each glass becoming a blazing memorial to the death of a comrade; the long, subtly erotic flirtation between Maciek and Christine, and their love-making in the bedroom; the wild

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party going on below while the youth wrestles with his conscience; the killing of the secretary, the two men gripped in an embrace; Maciek's headlong race through flapping clothes-lines at the end, crawling along a white wall, and finally writhing into the shape of a foetus as death overtakes him. Maciek, too, has become a symbol of east moving west; and the young killer's black leather jacket, dark glasses, brooding silences and sudden, touching flashes of charm, suggest, as everyone has pointed out, the erotic power of a Polish James Dean. Occasionally the film tilts over into self parody—notably in the sequence when an inverted crucifix shifts and groans above the two lovers in a church (and much of the film suggests a talent strained beyond its resources) but *Ashes and Diamonds* still retains a seductive brilliance and power.

Lotna (1959), generally admitted to be a failure, is chiefly of interest for its romantic use of color; it represents—in a very slavic story of a white horse, symbol of Polish courage, which passes from rider to rider as each is killed in a futile cavalry charge against the German tanks—Wajda at his most decorative and self-indulgent, and this time the story is not strong enough to sustain the baroque style. But with *Innocent Sorcerers* (1960) Wajda returned powerfully to form; here, the young Poles of the earlier films are discovered in a wholly contemporary world of motor-scooters, fast parties and willing girls, and the ravaged faces and bodies of the war years have filled out into the strength and beauty of a well-fed post-war generation.

Tadeusz Lomnicki, who played the heroic youth of *A Generation*, now appears as a doctor, Andrzej, in his late twenties, blond, hedonistic and cynical, while Zbigniew Cybulski, still brooding and sunglassed, is in the offing. The move to the West is now complete, and the early sequences of the film could have been set in Paris, Berlin or Rome. The hero stripped to underpants in a cluttered walk-up room scattered with mementoes and a bachelor's invariable litter; stockings draped in memory of a passionate encounter, while outside Lambretta and the tough friends wait. One isn't surprised to learn, early on, that the doctor plays drums in a local jazz-band, or that he is dodging a persistent girl-friend; this is very much New Wave Territory; then, with the introduction of a bored young girl, Magda, who misses her last train and is compelled to spend the night in Andrzej's flat, the film begins to assume the dimensions of a work of art; one expects a routine seduction, but instead the couple discuss the rules of seduction, acting out the roles of seducer and seduced in a comedy they make up as they go along. They play a game of strip-poker, the girl removing garment after garment until finally, the absurdity of the situation striking home to them, Andrzej is ready to call the whole thing off and prepare a plate of scrambled eggs.

At the end of the film, in the original version written by Jerzy Andrzejewski and Jerzy Skolimowski and planned by Wajda, comedy turns to tragedy: sophistication destroys love, and Magda walks away, their relationship unconsummated. But the producers, the Kadr Film Unit,

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forced a happy ending on them: after the doctor's desperate search for Magda through the streets, he finds her waiting for him in his room.

The last minute sell-out by no means destroys the impact of this fresh, graceful and quietly erotic film. It is full of wit and an edged, urbane charm, but the underlying dark poetry of Wajda is unmistakable. In the central characters, the whole nature of post-war youth is exposed: its sardonic common-sense, its self-destructive smartness and amorality, its permissive sensuality and moments of fierce disillusion.

In *Samson* (1961) Wajda returned to the period of *A Generation:* a frail Jewish youth, Jakub Gold (Serge Moulin) ironically assumes the mantle of the Biblical hero who only discovers his strength when he finally joins the revolutionary cause and brings down the walls of the temple—an underground printing works discovered by the Gestapo—with a bomb at the end. Running from the Warsaw ghetto, Gold finds hatred everywhere; the fact that he has survived is charged against him. "A man remaining outside the strife is as weak as Samson with his hair cut off," runs the Press release.

The character of Jakub Gold—fatalistically returning to certain death in the ghetto, only finding his Samson's powers by self-immolation for an heroic cause—is in direct line with Stach's in *A Generation,* and one sees Wajda's nostalgic need to return to a period when hopes and ideals were high. Serge Moulin's remarkable performance suggests the endurance, the resilience of the character, and the agonised facing of his destiny by the runaway. But the film is severely flawed by the symbolism which is Wajda's curse; the Biblical parallels lie heavily on scene after scene, and too often the beautiful, bleak images—figures strikingly disposed in the Cinemascope frame—simply become melodramatic friezes, theatrical backdrops to a heavily overworked allegory.

Wajda's most recently released feature (he directed an agreeable episode of *Love at Twenty*) was *The Siberian Lady Macbeth,* made in Yugoslavia; it was based on a story by Leskov, which had been turned into an opera by Shostakovitch in the early Thirties. The story itself, in a recent edition rather stiffly translated by David Magarshack and introduced with an excessively laudatory preface by V. S. Pritchett, originally appeared in Dostoevsky's periodical *Epoch* and deals, in solemnly pedestrian fashion, with the tragedy of a woman—Katrina Ismaylov—driven to murder by passion and greed. A bored, restless Emma Bovary of Russia, she falls in love with a penniless clerk, kills her husband when he surprises her in an embrace, and destroys the child which stands between her and her inheritance. The final passages of the story have a slightly stronger narrative power as Katrina, condemned to punishment in Siberia, plucks her female rival from a raft in a river and drifts away with her to her death.

Wajda seizes on the one dramatic thread which runs through the story—the doom which destroys the lovers—and he develops the film

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in starkly tragic terms, achieving a real sense of mounting horror in the final scenes of punishment and death. The use of Cinemascope is very striking, and the Director evokes with considerable skill the cramped provincial town, the woman brooding alone in black, the sudden outbreak of lust and the husband's blind fury.

A film of merit, then, but for Wajda, one can't help feeling, a temporary withdrawal from the themes that can wring the best from his talent. He has recently been working on an historical film, *Ashes,* but one would like to see him return to the world of *Innocent Sorcerers;* contemporary Poland remains a rather shadowy presence on the cultural map of the West and Wajda, poised between two worlds, dealing in the most powerful of international mediums, seems uniquely equipped to cast light on that darkness in the years to come.

B. H. HAGGIN

Ballet and Music Chronicle

CRITICAL WRITING, AS I HAVE POINTED OUT, includes the making of imaginary points about imagined artistic happenings; and this was true of some of the newspaper reviews of the American Ballet Theater's 25th birthday season at the New York State Theater. These described not what was actually presented to the eye by the actual company, but instead what *would* and *should* have been—and in the reviewer's imagination therefore *was*—presented by the company they wanted, and therefore believed and proclaimed, the American Ballet Theater to be: a company with a personnel and a repertory that made it America's greatest, the American counterpart of the Russian Bolshoi and Kirov and the English Royal Ballets. In these reviews the company had in Lupe Serrano and Toni Lander ballerinas comparable with Alicia Markova and Alicia Alonso years ago; in Royes Fernandez and Scott Douglas, male virtuosos comparable with Igor Youskevitch and Yurek Lazovsky. But not on the stage of the New York State Theater, where the actual Lupe Serrano one saw was a technically proficient dancer who appeared to produce the fluid movements of the *Nutcracker Pas de Deux* with arms and legs of steel; where the actual Toni Lander's movements, her manner, and her facial expressions in the *Grand Pas—Glazunov* made one think one was seeing Beatrice Lillie in a spoof of the ballerina operation; and where the actual Royes Fernandez and Scott Douglas were anything but impressive as their partners. What the actual *Giselle* with Serrano was, as against the one

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in the reviews, I didn't get to see; but I can report that Balanchine's *Theme and Variations* danced by Serrano or Eleanor d'Antuono with Fernandez, in their ugly new costumes, was not what it had been when danced with elegant brilliance by Alonso and Youskevitch, in their original beautiful costumes. However, though the actual company has no great dancers, it has several good ones—notably Ruth Ann Koesun, whose exquisitely modulated Waltz with guest-dancer John Gilpin was the high point of her lovely dancing in a good performance of *Les Sylphides*; and Sally Wilson, who also danced beautifully in this piece. It still has John Kriza, with lessened agility as a dancer, but with undiminished powers of presence and dramatic projection in his comic role in Agnes de Mille's *Frail Quarry* (originally called *Tally-Ho*), his grimly amusing one in Herbert Ross's *Caprichos.* With Koesun and Sally Wilson in *Caprichos,* with Wilson and guest-dancer Carmen de Lavallade in *Frail Quarry,* the actual performances of these pieces were good, as was the performance of Jerome Robbins's *Fancy Free.*

So with the repertory that in the reviews was "matchless" in size and variety. In actuality the long Ballet Theater list includes the many worthless pieces—dropped after a season or two—that have been commissioned year after year with the lack of artistic judgment and discrimination that was exhibited again in what was presented this time. The revivals included—among the fine pieces like *Billy the Kid, Fancy Free, Caprichos, Lilac Garden*—de Mille's entertaining *Frail Quarry,* but also her *Fall River Legend,* one of her serious pieces of Americana, this one concerned with the Lizzie Borden case in hour-long boring detail. And the new works too included on the one hand as impressive an achievement as Robbins's *Les Noces,* which I will say more about in a moment, but also two more American pieces by de Mille whose American subjects—a country calendar of the seasons in *The Wind in the Mountains,* an aspect of the racial problem in the South in *The Four Marys*—didn't increase the moderate interest of the movements which de Mille's resourceful use of her personal vocabulary and style devised for them. The new works also included Glen Tetley's *Sargasso,* a "milestone" in the columns of the *Herald Tribune,* but on the stage of the New York State Theater a laughable monstrosity of modern-dance-style "expressive" contortion and distortion; and Bentley Stone's *L'Inconnue,* which even in the *Herald Tribune* was a mere experimental workshop product that didn't warrant presentation in a professional theater to the general public. And the historic Bournonville *La Sylphide* as reconstructed by Harald Lander was—as against the historic *Giselle*—not very interesting to the eye of today; though I must add that it gave Toni Lander a role in which she operated more impressively than in *Grand Pas—Glazunov.*

It was not merely in this context that the performances of Robbins's *Les Noces* were the exciting occasions of the Ballet Theater season: the

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work was one of the notable achievements of the powers which this most outstandingly gifted of American choreographers has exercised in ballet with only occasional success. The successes have been those of a master of comedy—whether the robust comedy of *Fancy Free* or the delicately, wryly humorous perception of *Afternoon of a Faun*; the failures have been those of the master of comedy who felt that to be a serious artist he had to deal with serious subjects in a serious manner, and who produced ballets embodying his thought on the human condition—ballets like *Facsimile* and *The Age of Anxiety*, about lonely people, and exhibiting personal privacies that were embarrassing to look at. But in *The Age of Anxiety* the four lonely people got involved now and then with a lot of other people in episodes which provided occasions for Robbins to exercise his power in the orchestrating of large groups. And in *Les Noces*—where Robbins operated under the conditions and limitations imposed not only by Stravinsky's score but by a scenario and text concerned with a Russian peasant couple in the ritualized public situations of their marriage—his dealing with these situations was the varied and exciting detail of the perpetuum mobile of imaginative large-group orchestration that he fitted to the unending reiterations of the music—all against the background of on-stage instrumentalists and singers and the huge icon figures of Oliver Smith's backdrop. Wonderfully imagined and moving, after all this, was the end: the last poignant percussive sounds of the music, and the boy and girl standing in embrace alone on a small platform.

Much of the advance publicity about the Royal Ballet's season at the Metropolitan Opera House was concerned with one of its new works, the evening-length *Romeo and Juliet* of the company's principal choreographer, Kenneth MacMillan—his setting of the Prokofiev score used in the ballet presented by the Bolshoi company a few years ago. The MacMillan work got forty-three curtain calls at its London premiere; it was warmly praised by the perceptive English critic Clive Barnes; and at the Metropolitan it was applauded by an audience which apparently was content to see richly costumed dancers on a sumptuously set stage make movements that told the familiar story. But for someone who asked in addition for movements that exhibited imaginative invention in the manipulation of dancers' bodies, this *Romeo* was an evening-long bore. The crucial instances of this were the episodes of Romeo and Juliet alone; and here I will not speak of the ever new and fascinating ways that Balanchine keeps discovering for a pair of dancers to move in relation to each other, but will instead recall the breathtakingly beautiful movements Antony Tudor devised in his individual style for the bedroom pas de deux of his *Romeo and Juliet* years ago. MacMillan could produce nothing of this kind, nothing even adequate, for this supreme moment—nothing but the few clichés of his vocabulary and occasional laborious ingenuity that revealed the poverty of invention concealed at other times by story-telling and hubbub.

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But most of the publicity was about Rudolf Nureyev; and its magnitude and character—in particular some of the unpleasant personal details in the news-magazine cover stories in brashly ominiscient news-magazine style—caused some people to feel they should express disapproval of the offensive ballyhoo or of the offensively egotistic behavior of its subject by not going to see Nureyev, and other people to suspect that the ballyhoo was about someone not really extraordinary and worth seeing. Both were wrong: the ballyhoo happened, in this instance, to be about someone really extraordinary and worth seeing; and what he did on the stage was something to go and see regardless of what he himself did elsewhere or what anyone else said about it in news-magazine publicity stories. If Margot Fonteyn didn't let the appalling things Nureyev was reported to say to her deprive her of the fascination and stimulation of dancing with him, a spectator shouldn't let them deprive him of the experience of, say, the bravura dancing, overwhelming in its brilliance, power and projective force, that Nureyev did in the *Laurentia Pas de Six*.

I will add that he is someone to go and see regardless of the things he sometimes does on the stage. At one point in Odette's supported adagio in Act 2 of *Swan Lake* he did a couple of leaps which could have been interpolations of his own and, as such, egotistic intrusions; but as such they were a momentary flaw in what was for the rest a progression of intensely beautiful and poetic movement that wonderfully framed and heightened the effect of Fonteyn's marvelous dancing; and as such they were something to treat as one treated Glenn Gould's perverse thumping out of meaningless bass figurations in his great performance of Mozart's Concerto K.491: something to regret as one noticed it and then to put out of mind for the great things that followed.

But some things he did on the stage that were criticized didn't seem to me to deserve the criticism. In an article in the *Herald Tribune* Michael Harrington contended that the "star treatment" of Nureyev had resulted in fixing "the attention of millions upon the worst in the ballet tradition: that a prettified banality should serve as the backdrop for an individual genius"—this specifically in the first act of *Swan Lake,* in which for almost an hour Nureyev "strolls, bows, receives flowers, sits, broods, mimes, and in general pays scrupulous respect to all the dear, dead traditions, those holy dodo birds of ballet." All this was for the Tsars, as against Balanchine's *Serenade, Four Temperaments* and *Agon,* in which he "[integrated] the angularities and dissonances of modern dance—and, more importantly, of modern life—into the ballet vocabulary" and "gave the chaotic, traumatic, breakneck experiences of these times an aesthetic form." I doubt that Balanchine would accept these as the facts about his ballets; and Mr. Harrington is equally remote from fact in his idea of the Royal Ballet's putting on *Swan Lake* to display egotistic posturing by Nureyev, and indeed in his idea of Nureyev's operation in the first act as mere

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egotistic posturing. *Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty* and *Giselle* have been in the Royal Ballet's repertory for many years, as three great classics of ballet which it is as legitimate for the Royal or the Bolshoi or the Kirov to present today as it is for a theater company to present plays by Shakespeare, Congreve and Chekhov. And this year the company presented a new staging of *Swan Lake* by Robert Helpmann, with revisions and additions to make the work more plausible and effective for audiences of today than the company's earlier reconstruction of the original ballet as it was performed in St. Petersburg early in this century. Thus, in the original first act the action stopped when the dances in celebration of the Prince's birthday began, and he sat watching them as an interested but motionless spectator until they ended, when dramatic action resumed and he resumed his miming in it. But in the newly staged first act the action continued and was integrated with the dancing: now and then the Prince, as he watched the dancers, was impelled to join them for a few minutes; at other times he sat visibly abstracted and brooding, his thoughts elsewhere; and his troubled state of mind was conveyed further—when his guests left—in a new meditative solo. The new details in the Prince's role were executed by Donald MacLeary and Christopher Gable when they performed it; and when they were, they were noticed by the audience, as Helpmann intended them to be. And the only difference on the one occasion when Nureyev executed them was their more powerful communicative effect.

With the New York City Ballet giving us only the great ballets of today, we must be grateful to the Royal Ballet for its presentations of the great classics of the past, and additionally grateful for the presentation that includes Nureyev, whose style wouldn't work in Balanchine's *Four Temperaments* or *Agon* but does work with superbly enhancing effect in *Swan Lake* or *Giselle*.[1] It is these classics, and others of this century like *Les Sylphides,* the original Diaghilev *Firebird* and *Petrushka,* that are the interesting and valuable part of the Royal Ballet's repertory for us, not the ballets of present-day English choreographers—not MacMillan's *Romeo,* or his even worse *The Invitation,* or Ashton's boring *Daphnis and Chloë,* or his *Marguerite and Armand.* The performances of those classics with Fonteyn in previous visits, and now with Fonteyn and Nureyev, have been some of the most distinguished, moving and unforgettable artistic operations we have seen here; but even without Fonteyn, and without Nureyev, they are, and probably will continue to be, almost the only Royal Ballet offerings worth going to see—almost, because of the occasional inclusion of Ashton's early comic masterpieces, *Façade* and *A Wedding Bouquet.*

[1] This is the answer to the statement Balanchine is reported to have made, that Nureyev is old-fashioned and not for today. Nureyev dances in the style he learned in Russia—the style other Russian dancers learned—the style one sees in Russian productions of the old classics—and a style that works in the Royal Ballet's productions of them.

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More justified was the advance publicity about the new work of the New York City Ballet's spring season—not just a new ballet of Balanchine, but one of evening length, *Don Quixote,* to a specially commissioned score by Nicolas Nabokov, with scenery and costumes by Esteban Francés. (And some of this publicity was concerned, properly, with Balanchine's one appearance in the title role at a benefit preview before the premiere.) Balanchine was served well by Francés, most notably with the magnificently somber set and courtiers' costumes for the second act in the ducal palace. But personal loyalty to a friend—an admirable quality, but not in artistic matters—resulted in Balanchine's being handicapped by one of the feeblest, most boring and, after a couple of hours, most irritating pretenses at music-making in my experience. However Balanchine had overcome similar handicaps before, and he triumphed over the Nabokov score this time.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza would seem to lend themselves to being realized on the stage in dance; and one must suppose that such a realization by Balanchine would have been fascinating—in addition to making the work a ballet throughout. But he chose to make them mime roles, and the work a mingling of mime, spectacle and dancing. In the mime and spectacle one observed the play of Balanchine's mind, his theater sense, his fantasy, his humor—most powerful in the second act, which began with a ceremonial dance of the courtiers that chilled audiences into complete silence at its conclusion, and, after a series of divertissements, reached a climax in the courtiers' baiting of Don Quixote. And the dancing offered additional examples of the fascinating new invention that keeps coming from that inexhaustible mind—notably the solos of Mimi Paul and Anthony Blum in Act 3, and one number in a genre I don't remember having seen before in Balanchine's work: the enchanting pas de deux in folk-dance style of Suki Schorer and John Prinz, among the divertissements of Act 2. (Balanchine previously had taken girls out of the corps for solos revealing the capacities he had perceived; now he had done this with a boy.) These were in addition to the marvelously beautiful and varied invention for Suzanne Farrell in her appearances in different guises in the course of the work.

To the mime scenes Farrell brought the moving expressive projection she had first exhibited in *Meditation.* With this, and with her breathtakingly beautiful dancing, her operation left one overwhelmed. Of the other dancing, Mimi Paul's stood out vividly in its distinction of style, with impressive contributions by Suki Schorer, Patricia McBride, Marnee Morris, Patricia Neary and Anthony Blum; of the other miming, Richard Rapp's of the old knight in his world of illusion was effective and touching, and Deni Lamont's of Sancho offered the few telling strokes of a superb comic. (Balanchine's one appearance in the title role was made, unfortunately, in a performance which wasn't entirely ready and at times distracted his attention

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from his role; also, it was made, it seemed to me, in a state of great fatigue. But even with the lessened force of presence and projection it was something I am grateful for having seen.)

Don Quixote came after a month of repertory and was followed by performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream;* and interesting in that connection were some of Balanchine's remarks in a *Life* article, in which he enunciated an attitude on ballet curiously different from his attitudes on other arts. We may today, it appeared, look at Michelangelo, and presumably listen to Mozart; but in ballet "we have got to enjoy the now"—the ballets made with the dancers of today, which exist only with these dancers, and which therefore are the only ones that do exist for us—not the ballets made with the dancers of 100 years ago that existed only with those dancers. "It is like a butterfly. I always say butterflies of yesterday don't exist"—which is Balanchine's answer when one begs for revivals of his *Cotillon, Le Baiser de la Fée, Jeu de Cartes, Danses Concertantes.* Actually, the New York City Ballet's repertory consists mostly of Balanchine butterflies of various yesterdays, ranging from the recent *Bugaku, Liebesliederwalzer, Episodes* and *Agon* to the *Prodigal Son* and *Apollo* of almost 40 years ago, performed by other dancers than those he made them with; and one may therefore ask why not also *Cotillon, Le Baiser de la Fée, Jeu de Cartes* and *Danses Concertantes.* But when Balanchine says *he* is interested only in what he is making with the dancers he has now, he may be confirming someone's suggestion that he is interested only in the making of a ballet and loses interest once it is made. This suggestion was offered as a possible explanation of what I found difficult to understand: Balanchine's permitting defects in the performances of his ballets to continue uncorrected—defects ranging from the zigzagging lines instead of the absolutely straight ones needed for the proper effect of his choreographic designs in *Swan Lake,* or the similar inexactness in *Ballet Imperial,* to Shaun O'Brien's entrance in the manner of a severe drill sergeant rather than a forgiving father at the end of *The Prodigal Son,* or Arthur Mitchell's fussy and hammed-up performance in *Bugaku,* or Jacques d'Amboise's stiff pompousness in *Apollo.*

Last spring's season offered familiar beautiful things like *Swan Lake* and *Scotch Symphony* with Allegra Kent, the Kent-Villella *Bugaku* (accept no substitute!), Farrell's performance in *Liebesliederwalzer,* Mimi Paul's second movement of *Symphony in C,* Villella's performances in *Apollo, Tarantella, Donizetti Variations* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* d'Amboise's in *Raymonda Variations;* and also new things like Farrell's performance in *Monumentum pro Gesualdo,* McBride's in *Ballet Imperial,* Suki Schorer's first movement of *Symphony in C,* and Mimi Paul's Helena, Sara Leland's Hermia and Patricia Neary's Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* In addition the long-awaited return of Violette Verdy enriched performances of *Liebesliederwalzer* and *Episodes* with her unique and excit-

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ing combination of exactness, enchanting elegance and style, dazzling brilliance, and dramatic power.

Wondering what the dancer's eye was aware of in Verdy's dancing, in addition to the elegance and style that enchanted the non-dancer's eye, I asked members of the company. One of them, recalling Verdy's first movement of *Symphony in C,* said: "It was so elegant, with such quality; and the phrasing—the way she fell off those points! It's beautiful to see someone fall when she *wants* to fall and *controls* the fall; and it's one of the hardest things to do. It's hard enough just to find the balance; and some dancers just hit it and go on. But Verdy gets the value out of *reaching* the point, and *phrasing* it: of getting up to it, and hitting it, and then going off it. And that's finished dancing."

It was such details that the dancers spoke of—"these small, delicate things," as one of them put it. Thus, at the beginning of the Tchaikovsky *Pas de Deux,* "she steps back, back, back—and rests; then she begins the first phrase—pirouettes—and looks down; and just the tilt of the head is so sweet and right." Or, later in that piece, "she goes upstage and her partner pulls her: she goes just far enough —then turns and is back to him." Again, in that piece, "the skirt of her costume flows and floats in the same way as she does; and it's an extraordinary thing that she can make her body act like this soft material." And in the *passés* she does at one point, there is the way she uses her eyes: "It's a very small thing to think of when you're making a performance; but it's a big thing from the audience's point of view. Very few realize it and understand it; but Verdy does. When she does this *passé, passé,* hold, it's not only the foot and the leg and the body and the arms, but the eyes too, with everything reaching the same point in time perfectly. And in the *passé* it's not just the foot and leg moving up from the stage to the knee: she brings them up as though they bounced right from the music. Another example of this feeling for music comes near the end of the piece, where she does some turns, then stops, but doesn't really stop: she hits that final pose with the music, but as the music continues and diminishes her arms and fingertips are still going with it, then the air just beyond her fingertips: her movement goes through her body, her arms, her fingertips, and pushes the air a bit, before it ends."

These last details come from someone for whom "the most distinctive thing about Verdy is the musical quality she has. It's an extraordinary, complete musical understanding, almost like Balanchine's in the way she can make you *see* the music. She did that with the first movement of *Episodes.* I didn't understand the score; but when I watched her I could understand the music and could see what Balanchine was after. Certain lunges didn't make sense—choreographic sense—to me when I saw someone else at rehearsal just lunge and turn, lunge and turn. Then I saw Verdy do them, and I said, 'Of course.' When she lunged and turned I saw a motivation for the

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lunge and turn—both in visual terms and in relation to the music."

This musical understanding, one dancer thought, had a great deal to do with "the amazing way Verdy understands a new role and develops it immediately, as soon as it is started. I have to learn the steps and the counts and digest them, and bring something to the role after that; but she brings something to it while she's learning the steps: you can see her doing it. I remember when a dancer was showing her the steps of a role: when Verdy repeated them they weren't just the steps any more, the way she suddenly brought them alive and made things happen and explode."

The musical understanding works with what she has as a dancer. "She has natural gifts for dancing," someone said. "Her feet are good, with a wonderful turn-out, which is so difficult to acquire. Her legs are good; her body is in good proportion, with the size and length of the legs right for the rest of the body; her head is the right size; the contour of the arm is nice. All these things make for the over-all picture. In addition she knows her way, so to speak, around the stage—which is important. And she looks beautiful on the stage: she can make herself look absolutely lovely—and chic, really chic—on the stage. Whereas offstage she's just not interested: she has her heart and her soul and her life in this thing called ballet—this theater business. In Russia, when we had a performance at eleven in the morning, she would be in the theater at eight, preparing, and doing her make-up for an hour and a half.

"Also, she is a thinking dancer; and because she works with her mind as well as her body, she works well by herself. It's important to take your classes—to feed on that steady diet of technique; but you also have to be able to work alone; and this is something Verdy does very well. She knows her body, and what she has to give it; and the only trouble is that she may get so involved in her work that she will go too far and knock herself out. She does a bar for an hour and a half, where ordinarily a bar is 35 minutes. Then she does floor work; then she goes back to the bar with toe shoes. She has all this fantastic discipline, this fantastic dedication to the essentials that have to be worked at day in and day out. It's easy to get by on a slim diet of work, and many dancers do; but the really great dancers are the ones who work on absolutely everything, and who work with their minds as well as their bodies, like Verdy. Erik Bruhn is an incredible dancer; but he didn't just happen to get that way. The same with Verdy: she's not a great dancer because she just happened to become one, but because she faced and accepted the challenge, the demands of the endless thing that goes on day after day, with all the small details that are so hard to keep up and keep going. Just the carriage of the hand: it has to be worked on; and Verdy has the will to work on it. And everything else: the holding of the head, the ease here, the strength there, the stretch here, the pull there—everything."

What this endless work produces was described by a dancer to

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whom I spoke admiringly of Verdy's *Swan Lake.* "It's terrible when you are excited by someone who is dancing beautifully, and then you see a hand or a look of the head that is wrong. You want to see a complete performance: that's beauty! that's art! And a complete performance that isn't calculated—that is spontaneous, that just happens. Verdy gives you that. And she gives it to you in *Stars and Stripes* as well as *Swan Lake.* Some dancers are good only in certain things: they are lyric dancers, or dramatic dancers, or romantic dancers, or *demi-caractère* dancers. But Verdy is such a rounded dancer that I can see her doing any role. The remarkable thing, in fact, is that this French dancer, coming here to another style and another repertoire, has pointed up Balanchine's intentions in certain roles more than any of his other dancers. She's brought out things in roles that no one ever saw—that were always there, and that I'm sure Balanchine wanted to begin with, but that other dancers just didn't bring out. She made a great impression on the company because everything she did she made her own—she made a real performance of. She did it right from the start with the first thing she danced, the first movement of *Symphony in C:* it was *never* danced so well. She did it with *Firebird:* that was absolutely superb! She put it on and wore it: when she came out on stage she was that bird! And she did it with roles that were dull, that nobody wanted to dance, and that she made fantastic. The first movement of *Western Symphony,* for example: it's not very distinctive, but she completely understood it and took the western thing with her French flair, so that she got all the humor out of it that was intended and made it a scream. The same with *Stars and Stripes:* instead of just a bunch of girls running around with her leading them, she made it into a real parade, baton-twirling situation, and interesting thing, with her darting in and out and livening up the atmosphere."

There was more; but these are the most important things I was told about Verdy.

The Hunter College Opera Workshop's production of Britten's *Albert Herring* confirmed the impression I got at Tanglewood in 1949—that while the work has its stretches of the writing that is nothing but the inexpressive and unattractive sounds the resourceful craftsman was able to grind out to carry words and action, there are also places where Britten applied himself successfully to the task of real invention for the situation—notably Lady Billows's announcement to Albert that he has been elected King of the May, the coronation party, and the dirge in the last scene. These are enough to make the opera one of Britten's better works; and if it didn't come off at Hunter College with all the comic effect it had at Tanglewood, this was because it didn't have someone as believable in appearance and manner as Tanglewood's David Lloyd in the title role.

The Munich Bach Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Karl

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Richter, well known here through recordings, appeared in a Carnegie Hall series of which I heard the performances of the *B-Minor Mass,* the *St. Matthew Passion* and the first three parts of the *Christmas Oratorio.* The chorus, even with the unattractive tone of its mostly young sopranos, is a superb one; the same is true of the small orchestra, whose fine winds include an incredible performer on the small Bach trumpet, Maurice André; the soloists ranged from the outstanding Ernst Haefliger to the adequate Ingrid Bjoner, Hertha Toepper, Kieth Engen and Lothar Ostenburg. And Richter's shaping of the music with his often untraditional but always enlivening tempos and dynamics produced highly effective statements of the works—concerning which I must add that what is arid and boring in them was still arid and boring.

Interested in Pierre Boulez's conducting, after Stravinsky's praise of it, I heard the concert in the BBC Symphony's Carnegie Hall series in which he conducted Webern's Six Pieces Op. 6, the three excerpts from Berg's *Wozzeck,* his own *Doubles,* and all three of Debussy's *Images,* of which *Rondes de Printemps,* though one of Debussy's most marvelous scores, is so rarely played that I had never heard it in a concert hall. Of the new works, Boulez's *Doubles* made no sense to me, but Webern's Six Pieces, since it is a still early transitional work, offered actual phrases, some of them stated with wonderfully calculated subtle orchestral coloring, and sometimes producing a moving expressive or atmospheric effect. In the production of these phrases Boulez operated with a complete grasp of the music and command of the magnificent orchestra, a complete adequacy, and never more than adequacy, of what he did for what it got the orchestra to do, that made this the most impressive conducting operation since Toscanini's and Cantelli's. It was an operation I could best appreciate in the Debussy pieces I was most familiar with—in particular *Ibéria,* which I knew almost entirely from Toscanini's performances: in Boulez's superb performance the first movement was brisker; the second, if I remember correctly, more languorous; the third astonishingly different from Toscanini's in its strict tempo, in complete disregard of Debussy's indicated modifications of the tempo.

Toscanini's *Ibéria* hadn't left me with any dissatisfaction over his handling of the very first accented chord of the work on the downbeat of the first bar or the transition from the second movement to the third; and I didn't hear anything different in Boulez's handling of these details. But Michael Steinberg wrote that by preserving continuity in the transition Boulez passed "a crucial test in . . . *Ibéria* . . . failed by all other conductors I have heard"; and that "another notorious problem spot in *Ibéria*" was that first accented chord, "usually converted by conductors into a ponderous thump," but not by Boulez, who "gave it as an upbeat," so that "it had force, but with spring rather than weight." I would have thought there was enough to praise in the real things Boulez did.

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ROGER SALE

Mirror of Excellence and Uncle to the Cosmos

THE PUBLICATION OF THE THIRD AND LONGEST VOLUME of Ernest Samuels' biography of Henry Adams brings to a climax the second phase of work on this man who, it can be safely predicted, will some day seem the most important member of his family.[1] For the first twenty years after Adams' death the heaviest tasks were performed as labors of love by Henry Cabot Lodge, Worthington Chauncey Ford, Mabel LaFarge, Ward Thoron, and others who had known Adams late in his life. Then the university mind took over and examined Adams' ideas with full dress detachment, viewed his ironies with suspicion, and re-told the story of his life in order to strip it of adoration, wonder, and *The Education*. The major works in this phase, outside of Samuels', are Elizabeth Stevenson's biography, William Jordy's excellent *Henry Adams: Scientific Historian,* J. C. Levenson's analysis of the *Mind and Art*, and Henry Wasser's book on the scientific thought; but there are others, and undoubtedly the second phase is not yet so complete that there won't be more like them. Samuels' biography is the largest of these, and can thus be asked to serve as a capstone of the phase in order to indicate its achievement and to outline the work still ahead.

Distrust of *The Education* is dominant; the scholastic mind inevitably sees the distortions, exaggerations, and exclusions of that book as potentially dangerous to an understanding of Adams' life and thought. As a result, though Samuels says more than once that he is not writing a "definitive biography," he adopts a method radically different from that of *The Education,* one that seems to deserve the name "old-fashioned." For the most part, the evidence—the writings, the letters to and from Adams, the diaries and memoirs of his friends—is laid out flatly; Samuels often embroiders but seldom attempts to interpret. At the opening of the present volume Adams is leaving for the South Seas with John LaFarge, and so we are given excerpts from Adams' long letters and from the travel journal he kept for Elizabeth Cameron; these are interspersed with passages from LaFarge's letters and from those of people Adams met there, like Robert Louis Steven-

[1] HENRY ADAMS: THE MAJOR PHASE, by *Ernest Samuels.* Harvard Univ. Press. $10.00. (The earlier volumes are THE YOUNG HENRY ADAMS, 1948, and HENRY ADAMS: THE MIDDLE YEARS, 1958.)

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son. Adams was doing some amateur geology and reading James D. Dana's *Corals and Coral Islands,* and so Samuels tells us a little about this work, about the controversy concerning Darwinian geology, about the role played in it by Adams' friend Alexander Agassiz, and about subsequent findings that have apparently vindicated the ostensibly obsolete Dana. But "about" is an important word here, for Samuels never sees his role as one which should explain the geological problem; his task is to note Adams' opinions and those of a few contemporaries, and not to explain or adjudicate. By his own lights, he has done his work well. If Adams meets someone, Samuels finds out who he is and what others thought of him so he can then summarize him with a single epithet: "the sympathetic King," "the medievalist Henry Osborn Taylor," "the scholar-poet Joseph Trumbull Stickney, the sculptor Saint-Gaudens, and the eccentric Sturgis Bigelow," "the famed Dr. Osler." Furthermore, despite his penchant for phrases like "all of" and "cannot help but," Samuels writes fluently.

As a result, one can read through the twelve hundred pages of the finished work almost without pausing for breath. On and on it goes, quoting, summarizing, briefly comparing, seeing its way by seeing what the next letter is about. Samuels' strongest genuine conjunction is "then"—"Adams returned to Europe and then he saw Cecil Spring-Rice and then he wrote to Hay," and the only way he breaks up the flow is with his comments at the beginning and end of paragraphs. He likes to begin with a plump remark: "Outliving one's contemporaries levied a progressive tax of obituary appraisal" (p. 521); "Then for the first time the flesh rebelled against the incorrigibly restless will" (p. 533); "If Elizabeth took the volume down from her shelves and read the poem summoned up from Adams's idealistic youth, she must have felt a pang of remorse to have awakened so deep a passion" (p. 67). Never has the idea of the topic sentence been so rigorously followed. The heart of the paragraph is then given over to quotations strung together with a minimum of comment, and the close, whenever possible, is orotund: "To the proud old matriarch who had also witnessed the passing of an old order he transferred something of the reverence that he had held for his aged mother" (p. 45); "He would discover the truth of the popular witticism that of the three main causes of madness—love, ambition, and the study of currency problems—the last was the worst" (p. 126). To accompany these we have sections headed "Journey into Chaos," "Rebirth in Normandy," "Poet as Prometheus."

If one is fleeing from the vulgarities of, say, Leon Edel's *Henry James,* one might feel inclined to breathe a sigh of relief at Samuels' unself-consciously ancient mannerisms and unassuming method. But unless we think so little of the possibilities of biography that our idea of old-fashioned is Sir Sidney Lee and of something newer is Lytton Strachey, we cannot say Samuels has many virtues of his type. In the first place, to use an old-fashioned word, he is a philistine. In the opening vol-

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ume he is eager to defend hallowed Harvard College from the charges brought against it in *The Education,* and so he lists those teaching there in the 1850's, as though the presence of the names themselves insured Adams the best training to be had. He is also much impressed by the London society that dazzled the young Adams, and while one can understand the response of the young personal secretary, one finds it hard to accept the word of a professor a century later who is taken in by a world that had Browning and Palgrave as its leading lights. Samuels is also stern on Adams' playfulness, and over and over, especially in the third volume, a lovely flight by Adams will be rebuffed with a curt, "characteristic irony." This, from a letter written during the panic of 1893, earns the phrase, "tall talk": "I am in a panic of terror about finance, politics, society, and the solar system, with ultimate fears for the Milky Way and the Nebula of Orion. The sun spots scare me. Ruin hangs over the Pole Star" (p. 118). Samuels says at the beginning of the first volume that "as a non-New Englander I have not accepted the Brahmin view of life as one that ought to prevail, however admirable or enlightened it may once have been." But Samuels understands Adams' Brahminism so vaguely that whenever he comes to deal with something "admirable and enlightened," he either gapes in awe or backs off rather tastelessly.

Secondly, Samuels assumes that Adams wrote in the same spirit as he does, and so a third of the work is taken up with long and undigested summaries of Adams' writings. For some minor things like the note on Count Edward de Crillon or *The Life of George Cabot Lodge* such summaries are perhaps useful, but at this late date to offer up the contents of *Mont St. Michel and Chartres* in great lumps, controlled only by minimal efforts to understand or evaluate, is to insult both one's author and one's audience. Both Levenson and Elizabeth Stevenson do this kind of thing, but both also manage to include some interesting ideas in their redactions.

Third, and most important given Samuels' task, Adams himself is lost in the welter of unshaped material. One need not be a lay analyst to have a conception of one's subject and the shape of his life; Elizabeth Stevenson's book, which by comparison with Samuels' is shapely and bold, can hardly be described as high-powered; R. P. Blackmur's "The Expense of Greatness" teaches more about Adams in ten pages than Samuels can in a thousand. If he were offering much new material, he might be able to justify such flatness, but only rarely does Samuels do more than work with scissors and paste. His greatest contribution is his reading of Adams' relations with Elizabeth Cameron, but characteristically, even when he sees something new, he does not ask what difference it made in Adams' life that he was in love with Mrs. Cameron, nor does he try to make a picture of her clearer than that presented by others. He obviously knows, in one sense, a great deal about Adams; but in another sense, he is ignorant. He "knows," for in-

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stance, that Henry and Brooks reversed the faith of their fathers in 1893 when they supported silver interests against the "gold bugs." He "knows," too, that this change was dictated in part by Henry's holdings in some western railroads and his real estate dealings in Kansas City and Spokane. Also, fifteen years ago Samuels "knew" that Henry and Charles Francis Adams, Jr. worked hard between 1868 and 1871 to understand the plundering of the railroads and the gold market by Jay Gould and James Fisk. But Samuels does not try to see the way the position taken in 1893 both continues and contradicts that taken earlier, he does not try to discover what happened in the intervening years to account for this, and he does not do these things because he seems never to have asked what Adams' interest in money was at different points in his life. He lists a number of books on bimetallism in the bibliography, and one feels confident that Samuels does understand a great deal about all this. But the knowledge is never used to inform the book. Perhaps Adams' greatest virtue as a writer is his ability to organize a narrative that develops complex lines of force; his biographer is almost totally lacking in that virtue.

So the most important question—what is the significance of Adams' life?—is never asked or implied; one can surmise only that Samuels thought that had been done fully enough in *The Education* and that he wanted his book to complement Adams'. But the emphases made by *The Education* are obviously not the only ones possible. For instance, what Adams wrote while teaching at Harvard is not as good as the work he did earlier. His contributions to *Chapters of Erie* (1871), especially the essays on the Bank of England and the New York Gold Conspiracy, are occasionally breathtaking in their revelation of an extremely tangled set of circumstances. But the essays of five years later on Anglo-Saxon institutions are not only written to fit a narrowing theory of historical method but also serve a jingoistic tone that implies that any institution that can be called a forerunner of American democracy is *a priori* good. Had Adams been content to work out these notions of racial inheritance he might well have fallen into the simple and hysterical patterns of mind shown by his brother Brooks. But he was not content; he left Harvard, went to Washington, and thereby found a way to assimilate the legacy of his family with his newly found Germanic ideas of historiography. But this much is only an outline, and in order to tell the story rightly one needs to assess how narrowly he escaped the fate of his younger brother, how much he understood about his future when he left Cambridge, how much the *History* was forced on him by his work on Gallatin, how much the failure of his efforts to organize a reform party in 1876 was decisive in all his other decisions. Samuels knows about all these problems, but he is unwilling to confront them.

The question is important, too, and not just because of its bearing on the Five of Hearts, the Washington clique of the early eighties,

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but because the ultimate result was the *History of the United States of America During the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson* and its successors, the nine volume work published in 1889-1891 that deserves far more than does the nominal twin, *Mont St. Michel,* to be linked with *The Education* of fifteen years later. Already when he was working on Gallatin in the late seventies Adams had discovered his major theme: "To my mind the moral of his life lies a little deeper than party politics and I have tried here and there to suggest rather than assert it. The inevitable isolation and disillusionment of a really strong mind—one that combines force with elevation—is to me the romance and tragedy of statesmanship. The politician who goes to his grave without suspecting his own limitations, is not a picturesque figure, he is only an animal." But the scope of the *Gallatin* was not broad enough to work such a theme fully, and for all that Adams admired him more than his master, Gallatin was not as right for the role as Jefferson. Samuels quotes with apparent approval Harold Laski's remark about the *History:* "It's no use trying to be superior to men like Hamilton, Jefferson, and Burr." But Hamilton is used in the work primarily as a contrast, Burr is difficult not to patronize, and Adams did not in the least feel superior to Jefferson. The harshness of Adams' irony is constantly and wonderfully modified by his conviction that even in 1800 the country was far too complex for one man, even Jefferson, to control except in ways that almost force irony on a sympathetic historian. Over and over Adams watches Jefferson make the country strong and centralized because government was the best hope against those foreign and domestic forces whose aim was plunder, thereby achieving the very kind of government he had sought to avoid. The resultant isolation and disillusionment of this really strong mind is seen as the price of greatness, and, because of this, Jefferson was, in the rich sense Adams came to give the word "teach," one of Adams' most important teachers. Here is his final vision of the departing president:

> With a sigh of relief which seemed as sincere and as deep as his own, the Northern people saw him turn his back on the White House and disappear from the arena in which he had for sixteen years challenged every comer. In the Northern states few regrets were wasted upon his departure, for every mind was intent on profiting by the overthrow of his system; but Virginia was still loyal to him, and the citizens of his own county of Albemarle welcomed with an affectionate address his final return. His reply, dignified and full of grateful feeling, seemed intended as an answer to the attacks of partisan grossness and a challenge to the judgment of mankind.

Jefferson could rest at his end, as Adams could not at his, and one reason for this, surely, is that Jefferson had achieved political power and historical fame and Adams had not. But Jefferson too had failed,

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as had Gallatin, and in telling their stories Adams does not slip into spite or gloating over the vanity of political wishes. The fullness with which Adams renders his own failure in *The Education* is what links that book with this earlier masterpiece and what makes irrelevant the fact that he was never a statesman.

He even tries to render irrelevant the fact that he was an Adams, but in one sense at least, it was too important a fact to discount. Born as late as 1838, he still inherited the moral and cultural achievement of the eighteenth century. He was taught to expect that he could understand his world, and so the childhood opposition of Quincy and State Street was not for him a drama but a "motive of education": winter and summer, cold and heat, town and country, force and freedom. He was taught what his grandfather believed to be self-evident, that there is a coherence between past and present such that the past can "teach" an intelligent man on what moral bases his sense of society and politics should rest. At the same time that Dickens was first learning about Sergeant Buzfuz and Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, John Quincy Adams could say that proper legal training should begin with the study of Justinian. Given this, of course Henry Adams floundered in the second half of the century, and looking back he could see only bewilderment leading on to failure. In 1858, "education had not begun"; in 1861 "his attempt at education in treason" had, "like all the rest, disastrously failed"; "a young American of 1863 could see little or nothing of the future." The insistence that he knew nothing but no one else knew more is a pose only if we take more lightly than he his heritage and his idea of education. He should have known what was happening, but he did not, and no one around him did either. We can easily say we have given up that idea and judge a college education now by finding the impressive names on the faculty; we can even be amused at Adams' horror upon discovering the height of knowledge was next door to the abyss of ignorance. Seen this way, Adams seems both very petulant and very ancient history.

But Henry Adams was no Miniver Cheevy, though he often tried to be. Only temperamentally and, in the narrow sense, biographically, did Adams seek out those avenues of silence where he could imagine the medieval world unified. But he knew more and better than this. He was not going to deny either the enthusiasm with which he and his friends had begun life in a "race for power" or the fact that they had miserably lost. He willingly asserted of *Das Kapital:* "I never struck a book that taught me so much, and with which I disagreed so radically in conclusion." He knew he had had his historical neck broken. He grasped multiplicity not just as a term defining the inevitable movement of gold-bug capitalism to socialism and communism, not just as something scientists were beginning to define, not just as an antonym to twelfth century unity brought about by society's obedience to the laws of acceleration, not just as the chaos that would

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transform democracy into a form of totalitarianism, but as a master that simultaneously rendered impossible his personal sense of education and forced upon him definitions of education broader than himself or the teachings of his heritage. "The young man himself," he said, "the subject of education," is not Henry Adams or any Adams or any Brahmin, but "a certain form of energy":

> The movement from unity to multiplicity, between 1200 and 1900, was unbroken in sequence, and rapid in acceleration. Prolonged one generation longer, it would require a new social mind. As though thought were common salt in indefinite solution it must enter a new phase subject to new laws. Thus far, since five or ten thousand years, the mind had successfully reacted, and nothing yet proved it would fail to react—but it would need to jump.

So the legacy of his life and of *The Education* is paradoxical, as he would have wished. On the one hand, his was not a mind that could jump past 1921; he was a Conservative Christian Anarchist, an English scholar of a Norman name praying to the Virgin, a jeering and sometimes vicious anti-Semite who was scornful and afraid of the masses, a clique-ridden man constantly hugging himself to himself. At its worst this side of Adams believed Dreyfus guilty no matter what he had done, and at its best it could produce only the precious *Mont St. Michel.* But on the other hand he accepted his disillusionment and bitterness and he read and traveled voraciously in an effort to meet the twentieth century without a shudder. The tools he had thought he needed to economize his energy were French, German, and mathematics, and these he used as best he could. They failed him and he knew it, but in watching them fail he was able to guess why and to glimpse some of the necessary new tools.

Part of Adams, thus, offers solace to those who despair of present attempts at education, to those for whom "the new social mind" is only the mind of Clark Kerr. His idea of unity, old and eccentric though it is, lies behind denunciations of democratic education just as de Tocqueville implicitly lies behind current objections to democratic political rule. It is not hard to locate these voices. Perhaps few would subscribe to Douglas Bush's fancy that education for all is education for none, but Paul Goodman's version of Conservative Christian Anarchism has its adherents, and liberals have generally agreed that the villain of the recent affair at Berkeley is any school with 27,000 students. But Adams' ideal of education has little in it that aspires to the cloister or to knowledge pursued for its own sake, the shelters for those who believe they have in him an intellectual ally. If instinctively Adams would have nodded derisively at the new "cathedrals of learning," he would also see that a mind that finds in the landscape of 1965 only Clark Kerr and mobocracy is a mind that, among other things, has not learned to jump: "Education must fit the complex

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conditions of a new society, always accelerating its movement, and its fitness could be known only from success."

Success then and now is only the failure least expensive to the energies which constitute social lines of force, and it does not take an Adams to see how inadequate to the present task of making any person fit for his world are alternatives to democratic education, broadly and mindlessly conceived though that education often is. Certainly the alternative presumably offered by the past, in which the ideals of rigor and excellence can be squandered as a matter of aristocratic right, is hardly appetizing even on its own terms, and it is difficult to create a comparison between the United States of 1905 and the same country sixty years later that does not see us making mastodonically slow but real steps forward. But comparisons are really not so much invidious as irrelevant. The accelerated speed of forces has guaranteed that only ideas of education as subtle and flexible as Adams' can survive for as long as two generations; the problem now is not, as it once might have been, one of choosing the pot in which to be melted, but of learning how to swim in the big pot that is the only one large enough to contain all the forces at work. Saul Bellow and Robert Coles are not really much alike, but each can qualify as having something like "the new social mind"; both are radically different from Adams, but neither smacks of the technician or of any accompanying competence that is ignorant of care, rigor, or excellence.

I am convinced Adams could have seen this; most of it he already saw in *The Education*. That is why he is so Janus-faced and his life so fascinating, especially during the "posthumous existence" of his last thirty years when his "artificial balance was acquired habit" and when he could say with his grand ironic cheerfulness that "he was an acrobat, with a dwarf on his back, crossing a chasm on a slack-rope, and commonly breaking his neck." That is why, finally, this last volume of Ernest Samuels' biography is the least satisfactory of the three: the opportunities were so great. Here Adams achieves the failure and ignorance that are his greatness, here the materials for biography are abundant, here the gestures are so polished and final that only the most literal minded need worry if the figure Adams presents is "the real Henry Adams." So the third phase beckons. To use a fancy he loved, the first phase was of ice, when the Adams created still had the solidity of remembered fact; the second phase was one of water, with Adams himself submerged in the blustering energy of the swimmers; the third, the phase of steam, needs more than anything else to understand the force of Adams, the work he has done in the world and will continue to do. It needs to calculate his ironies by means of reading the biography and to see the life as a great story of one of the first men who could be heroic in our century. Adams is still there, smiling, shuddering, hoping not to shudder, waiting.

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Some Gentlemen Scholars

How mannerly are the critics of fiction! They bow deeply to their ladies. "She helped me in every way at every stage in the preparation of this book" (Marcus; Knoepflmacher's tribute is more fulsome; Sachs's is decked out in ribbons). They are elaborately deferential to a foe. "Although I am in profound disagreement with Marvin Mudrick's argument in his *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery,* I have always profited from this disagreement" (Litz). The deficiencies of companions are pointed out in honorific terms. "Thus, a fine critic [Barbara Hardy] of George Eliot's 'form' seems compelled to argue defensively that the neglect of the 'strictly formal features' of her fiction merits an exclusive attention to her art, while an equally able expositor [George Levine] of the philosophical implications of George Eliot's determinism is betrayed into self-consciousness when, in his otherwise excellent discussion, he admits that he treats 'George Eliot as a philosopher rather than an artist' " (Knoepflmacher). The figure that occurs to me is that literary criticism is a kind of park, made not so long ago on land reclaimed from the shallows and swamps of passion and prejudice, and that fiction criticism is the newest and not the least elegant of the formal gardens cultivated in this park, a garden where only gentlefolk belong. Suitably scaled down, what Wright says of Fielding applies better to these critics themselves than it does to Fielding. "Doubtless the century is attractive either to those ambitious for gentility or to those nostalgic about gentility's decline. But Fielding and some of his contemporaries, who actually lived in that largely cruel and mostly ugly era, tried in what they wrote not to rub a civilized gloss on the England in which they lived: they tried to make civilization." In no part of the contemporary English-speaking world, to my knowledge, is discourse more refined than in the practical criticism of fiction, of which the first six of these seven books are examples.[1]

Litz in *Jane Austen* states explicitly what they all more or less assume. "In the present study I have tried to combine our new understanding of Jane Austen's techniques with an examination of the

[1] JANE AUSTEN: A STUDY OF HER ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT, by *A. Walton Litz.* Oxford. $5.75. HENRY FIELDING: MASK AND FEAST, by *Andrew Wright.* California. $3.50. GEORGE ELIOT, by *Walter Allen.* Macmillan. $3.95. RELIGIOUS HUMANISM AND THE VICTORIAN NOVEL: GEORGE ELIOT, WALTER PATER, AND SAMUEL BUTLER, by *U. C. Knoepflmacher.* Princeton. $6.50. DICKENS: FROM PICKWICK TO DOMBEY, by *Steven Marcus.* Basic Books. $5.95. THE DICKENS THEATRE: A REASSESSMENT OF THE NOVELS, by *Robert Garis.* Oxford. 30s. FICTION AND THE SHAPE OF BELIEF: A STUDY OF HENRY FIELDING WITH GLANCES AT SWIFT, JOHNSON AND RICHARDSON, by *Sheldon Sachs.* California. $7.00.

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moral and literary backgrounds of the novels." To an occasional visitor in this precinct, like myself, the result, while admirable, is a bit strange. I have read most of Austen's major novels and two or three essays about her, though no books; what "our new understanding of Jane Austen's techniques" may be, I had no notion when I began Litz's book, and little now; the dispensation under which I was raised encouraged each reader to have his own understanding instead of ours. Because I do not "keep up with the scholarship in the field," as the saying goes (the field in this case being criticism of British fiction), I am not competent to say just what "contribution to our new understanding" Litz or any of these other critics has made. But—again, to an interested outsider—what matters most in literary discourse is the level at which it is maintained; in Litz's book, it is elevated. Here, I have learned more than I had known (or see much point in knowing) about Austen's juvenile fiction and something about the course of her development as a novelist—a small essay's worth of knowledge. For the rest, the book offers the reward of polite conversation: moderate, polished, civilized in every respect, without lapses of taste, unimpassioned, never stupid.

Wright's *Henry Fielding* has the same virtues, to which is added a considerable elegance of sentence. "Here the passionate belief in freedom, to which a world of play opens itself, gives hope that in this novel if not in this life freedom will have the day." Neither of these critics is so obsessed by his thesis that he distorts his subject. On the contrary, a notion such as Wright's, that Fielding is making civilization by writing his novels, serves to illuminate them with a genial glow. However, once I get used to all this elegance, the prime effect these two scholarly books have is to make me feel uncouth: not even Austen is *that* polite, not even Fielding *that* civilized. One can't complain that these critics are precious or decadent; their sincerity is as genuine as their manners are flawless, for about nothing are they more sincere than about the necessity of flawless manners. Suppressing a belch, gazing yearningly up at *Northanger Abbey* and *Amelia* (which for some shameful reason I've never got around to reading), I salute these gentle critics and move on.

Allen in *George Eliot* is bluffer and gruffer in the British manner. He is quite dogmatic, he is full of good sense and no nonsense, he wastes no time on a thesis of his own or on the novelist's juvenilia and marginalia. He uses the biographical-critical method, and makes a good job of it. He pays no attention to Wayne Booth or Northrop Frye—woolly theorists, the pair of them. Leavis is his man, a sound practical moralist who laid out the great moral tradition in British fiction and put *Middlemarch* and *Gwendolen Harleth* right where they belong in it, dead center. But I read Leavis eighteen years ago, and in all this time I've not heard one voice (except Cecil Y. Lang's, in an unpublished lecture) dissenting from his judgment that George Eliot was

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a great novelist because she was a great moralist. (Dickens obviously affords a lot more pleasure of a not particularly moral sort—which demonstrates, if nothing else, the low regard pleasure is held in in the critical gardens.) Here is Allen saying the same old Leavis things still, saying them ably, to be sure, but nothing new. One can't impute insincerity to him any more than to the previous two critics; he means what he says as genuinely as they do. But Leavis spoke in the voice of a half-crazed prophet come to proclaim the truth, whereas Allen is just giving instruction in what is right, in received opinion. (About all I remember of *Adam Bede* is that I liked Hetty twenty times more than ever I liked Dorothea Brooke or anybody else in *Middlemarch*. Which of course is wrong.) Allen's book is roughly the length of *Silas Marner* and demands less of you. If you want to know the currently right opinions on George Eliot without having to plow through all those thousands of pages, some of them damned dull, you'll find those opinions laid out for you here, decently entomed, by the chairman of the *pro tem* committee for our new understanding of George Eliot.

Knoepflmacher does something rather different in *Religious Humanism and The Victorian Novel*. He situates his three novelists in cultural history and demonstrates how their lives and writings express the conflicts of their age, especially the erosion of Christianity by Progress. He does his job with learned thoroughness and intelligence; his judgments are excellent. But before getting very far in the book, I became subject to uneasy speculation: what had he written it for? He no more than the first three critics was moved by that primitive impulse: "Here's a good book you ought to read." Nor was he concerned, with the zeal of a scholar, to make it easier for you to get to the texts he has chosen to talk about. (Not one of the novels these books discuss presents the least difficulty to anyone who can read literary criticism about them.) Ultimately Knoepflmacher's purpose seems doubly antiquarian. First, his attitude in explaining the major conflicts of the Victorian age is appropriate to an explanation of some cultural crisis long ago and far away, the Albigensian heresy or the conquest of Peru. For my part, since I have endured these same conflicts in my own life, and have seriously considered the same resolutions his three subjects considered, this book made me feel about 150 years old, a sort of living fossil: "Still worried about *those* things in the mid-twentieth century?" Maybe I am odd in this; maybe a wholly modern reader, a true post-Christian, needs historical instruction in, say, how Butler attempted unsuccessfully to substitute utopian, relativistic religiosity for Christian faith. Maybe. Then, second and more important, Knoepflmacher incarcerates his chosen novelists and their novels in a bookish maze which makes for intellectual claustrophobia. (A more courteous way of putting it would be to say that they are seen as having passed into literary history.) Here are some sentences from the last page of his discussion of George Eliot (the novel at hand is *Daniel Deronda,* including the Daniel Deronda half).

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> Gwendolen Harleth is not allowed to become the utopian superwoman of Butler, Shaw, or Lawrence, ready to discard the past for a revitalized future. . . .
>
> The pilgrimage of Daniel Deronda could never have become the static absorption of the multiple and conflicting religions encountered by Marius the Epicurean on his long quest for a faith. . . .
>
> He [Deronda] is a queer mixture, half-clergyman and half-dandy, a cross between Theobald Pontifex and Disraeli's Coningsby. . . . There was a more credible way to depict this complex figure. As George Eliot's intelligent characterization of the "real" Ezra Cohen well demonstrates, Leopold Bloom was not completely out of her reach. . . . Bloom, the Christlike vulgarian and city-dweller oppressed by time and flesh, was contained in the reality she rejected.

George Eliot a stunter of Shavian superwomen and an aborter of Blooms? No, Mr. K., I think it wasn't like that. Tell me, old horse-faced moralistic passionate Matronym, was it like that for you? At all?

Reading these four books generates a swarm of questions. Whom are the critics addressing? If literary laymen, then their ideas should be less elaborated and their books should be shorter. If other critics, then much of the learned reference and summary and quotation is superfluous and their books should be shorter. What about concision and brevity as conversational virtues? All of these gentlemen teach college English—that is, the art of literary discourse—and in these books they are talking with their peers. Don't they realize that good conversation thrives on outrageous opinions succinctly and allusively put? The trouble is that they are trying too hard to "make civilization," a solemn task, instead of enjoying themselves in a civilized manner.

Despite such heavy thoughts, when Marcus's *Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey* came along, I looked into it because I love Dickens. (Also because it was there. Half-there, at any rate; for some reason Marcus has decided to publish his two-volume book in installments.) It is much better reading than the other four, largely because the author's manners are not above reproach. He keeps telling you—in the most enthusiastic way, quite coarse really—how wonderful Dickens is as a man and a novelist and how you owe it to yourself to read such and such a terrific novel, faults and all. "It [*Martin Chuzzlewit*] may also be called, as the English critic R. C. Churchill recently called it, the greatest work of comic genius in English literature, which I think it probably is." Really, old man, that's not the way things are done in these precincts. Moreover, Marcus is concerned to set Dickens in his literary, cultural history but not to blend him into it. He has been hit by Dickens—he, Steven Marcus, himself, now. He sees the world in extreme contrasts, he is learned and has gone to school to subtle masters, he is passionate about books and ideas: it is a pleasure to listen to what he says about Dickens. What he says about the world at large

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is sometimes harder to take. He has two tiresome crotchets: modern civilization, especially the bourgeois family, is Bad, and the psychological constructs which Freud invented and named are There. In one place, he speaks of "the affliction that goes by the name of modern civilization," and in another says, making crudely obvious what was figuratively valid, that Paul Dombey "is dying of a metaphysical and moral disease: middle-class culture." While discussing *Barnaby Rudge,* he says:

> In a kind of unbelievable pre-vision, Dennis, Hugh and Barnaby, the three prisoners, suggest the three institutions [*sic*] of the mind that Freud was to name and describe. . . . Dennis the hangman is a kind of super-ego gone berserk. . . . Hugh, the centaur, the creature of the Maypole and the woods, is the id given over to brutal aggression. . . . Barnaby is a paradigm of the defective ego, an imbecile, who, though he manifests a simple enjoyment of himself and life, is without power to understand and deal with the world, and is in consequence manipulated and battered on every side both by society and the forces that undermine it—at the mercy, in other words, of both superego and id.

If you happen to know *Barnaby Rudge* but not Freud's myth, the passage might help you understand the myth. If, as is more likely, you know Freud but not *Barnaby Rudge,* the passage leaves you none the wiser: all you have to do is read the novel and you already know everything Marcus here spells out, whether you consciously put it into Freudian terminology or leave it unsaid. Well, there is a considerable doctrinaire indelicacy in all this, but nothing outright stupid. Meanwhile, we have heard what one man, not what the Establishment, thinks about Dickens, who is worth thinking about. Not that the Establishment is stupid, just personless. Marcus is his own man.

Garis's *The Dickens Theatre* is perfectly mannered and accomplishes a modest task worth the trouble—it rectifies critical judgment. Dickens is not like other novelists, Garis says, in that his books are not like dramatic constructs revealing the inner life; they are like theatrical performances in which the performer's miming skill matters incomparably more than his self or his characters' selves. But fictional criticism, deriving mainly from James, is designed to talk about organically constructed dramas of the inner life. *Ergo,* fictional critics have been talking about Dickens badly because they have been applying inappropriate standards to his fictions.

> The basic argument of recent criticism claims that readers in the past were not aware of the symbolic structure of his novels, which they regarded as journalistic improvisations for the serial-novel audience. Accordingly, external and internal evidence has been offered to prove that Dickens planned his novels with complete consciousness

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> of his own symbolic proclivities and intentions. . . . On this basis a large body of symbolic interpretation of Dickens's work has been built up, much of it just and illuminating. The fallacy lies in the claim that those readers who did not name Dickens's structures "symbolic" were unaware of them. For the truth of the matter we can [paraphrase] Partridge: "Anybody may see that Dickens's novels are structures of symbols." . . . A theatrical artist displays in front of us his skills and the special illusions he creates by means of those skills, but he may also, by means of the same methods and under the same circumstances, perform before us a large structure of these illusions, which, by virtue of their planned interconnexions, will amount to a statement about the world and about human nature.

Obviously Garis makes good sense and those he is correcting, Edmund Wilson and Lionel Trilling among many, have been altogether too subtle and symbolic: Dickens is a performer with a message. Moreover, along the way, Garis speaks with unfaltering tact and good sense about various other novels, especially (guess who?) *Tom Jones, Emma,* and *Middlemarch* (you're right!). He also, as his subtitle suggests ("A Reassessment of the Novels"), talks about some of Dickens's novels, the late ones, at considerable length. There is nothing wrong with these discussions except that they are supererogatory. If you have understood Garis's opinions in his opening chapters, you can read those novels very well on your own.

There is only one substantial complaint to be made against this book, a generic complaint against nearly any scholarly book of literary criticism: why isn't it an essay instead? Except for books which are primarily something else—literary history, biography, especially esthetic speculation such as I. A. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism*—every major work of criticism in English up to the present age is in the form of a less than book-length essay. Henry James and T. S. Eliot, the past masters of our age, wrote essays in criticism; it is Lubbock and Leavis and other little ones who write it in volume-sized units. Not one of the six books at hand but would have benefited from being condensed to five to fifteen thousand words. A recent model of this sort of essay is Irving Howe's "T. E. Lawrence: The Problem of Heroism."[2] Howe said writing that essay took as much work—intellectual labor, *thought*—as a whole book would have taken. I'd have guessed it had been more, and well spent, all of it.[3]

[2] THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XV, No. 3 (Autumn, 1962).

[3] Of the various factors contributing to this inflated state of things, the nastiest, I suppose, is the status system in the Laputa where critics earn their living. A book from a good press is roughly equivalent to a couple of dozen offprints from learned journals but anything in print is worth cash in hand in the form of promotions and raises and job offers. A poet-professor tells of a mathematician in-law who did his dissertation on academic advancement. He discovered that, for a college teacher willing to move, there was a very high correlation between academic advancement

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With Sachs's *Fiction and the Shape of Belief,* everything changes. The first, trivial, but somehow suitable difference is the physical book: here is a scholarly volume published by a great university press (the same one that manufactured Wright's book elegantly enough), and a worse job of printing I haven't seen in years from a respectable house. The project of the book—title, table of contents, preface, index, footnotes—seems orthodox enough. But a bibliography is lacking, with the result that some footnote references are obscure; a Henley appears unintroduced at the bottom of page 70, to reappear regularly thereafter, never to be accounted for. Sachs's prose is archaically elegant—snuff-stained lace cuffs, powdered wig, stiff bows.

> No one can be more aware than I am that the very terms "theory," "formulate," "subtype" are remote from any form of poetic activity, nor that the prosaic tedium consequent on committing an act of classification seems at odds with a humanistic concern for literary works that have moved generations of men to laughter or to tears. . . . Nothing that contributes to even a purely intellectual understanding of the relationship of poets to poetry; of novelists to novels; of one vital form of human concern, ethics, to another, literary works, can be trivial. An eloquent expression of the intuitive recognition of the causes of a poem's excellence is one way of fostering such understanding, but it is only one of many and, though more palatable than most, it has its own limitations.

In other words, this man is disguised as a gentle critic but is some rougher type entirely. In his hierarchy of literary values, literary discourse is nothing like as elevated as it is in the gentlemen's scale; but he has another, harsher, nonliterary, ethical measure according to which it is far more serious. To him, an error in fictional criticism is by its nature also a moral error; and error matters, it affronts him, it goads him to sarcasm.

> Some critics find Allworthy's "deathbed" actions ridiculous in light of the later revelation that his illness was in fact trivial. Except for the irrelevant facts that the major characters, the reader himself, *and* Allworthy were *unavoidably* mistaken, I do not find a grain of justification for the notion that Fielding pokes fun at his fallible paragon.

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and quantity—irrespective of quality—of publication. Believing his thesis, he published what he could, fast, in obscure journals, and what he couldn't publish in them—his thesis, every term paper he could make presentable—he printed as monographs issued by a publishing house of his own invention; then he mailed offprints by the hundreds all over the country. He was nineteen when he wrote his thesis; at twenty-five he was a full professor. Another poet-professor (failed poet, assistant professor), hearing this story, had first a volume of his poems, then his dissertation, then a second volume of poems printed similarly, and within five years was chairman of the department. These events took place at two important universities with no special reputation for corruptness.

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What a relief abrasiveness can be in a genteel world! All the same, Sachs got himself rather tied up in the footnote just quoted. In his guise as gentleman, he does not give the names of the stupid critics or the exact places in which they published their stupidities. But it is of the essence of a true scholar to be specific in such matters. A valid if small complaint against this book is compendiated in its subtitle: "A Study of Henry Fielding with Glances at Swift, Johnson and Richardson." The book is not in fact a study of Fielding, in the usual sense of the phrase, and that "with Glances at" is neither felicitous nor accurate. Striving, or pretending to strive, to be both gentlemanly and scholarly, Sachs succeeds in being good at neither.[4]

What he does instead is something far more difficult and, to my mind, far more exciting. He is not studying Fielding and the others. He is defining the kinds of books they wrote. He assumes you can read a fiction by yourself and that, though you may not like, say, *Rasselas* as many others have done, you will respect it just because those others have valued it so highly; nor is he interested in biographying Fielding through his books (that's been done) or giving a reading of *Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews,* and *Amelia* (so has that, often and well). What he does is to define the kind of fictions *Rasselas, Gulliver's Travels, Pamela,* and Fielding's three are. He assumes a fund of common literary experience with the reader, and then proceeds to define its nature. He is a moral philosopher at a job of (literary) discrimination. There is no higher intellectual pleasure than engaging in such an enterprise when it is well done, and Sachs engages the reader in this one seriously and profitably.

Everybody would readily agree that *Gulliver* is a satire, *Rasselas* an apologue, and *Tom Jones* a novel (or, to use Sachs's more discriminating though still unsatisfactory term, a represented action). It is because everybody agrees to these loose identifications that Sachs sets out to define as precisely as possible what it is we are agreeing upon. To the creation of literature this defining is irrelevant, but it is useful for literary discussion. Its chief value and excitement, however, come from the exploration of and discrimination among a set of moral involvements. The ways a novelist—in this case Fielding—is related to his characters, his narrator, and his reader are in the highest degree complex, and the involved connections of his ethical beliefs to his artistic end are at the heart of the matter. It may not be necessary consciously and clearly to understand these intricacies in order either to write or to read a fine novel, but it is fascinating to do so. Generally, I avoid a job of definition as accomplishing little more than an obfuscation of the self-evident or the numinous, but when it involves moral

[4] He also has an irritating penchant for various intellectual gadgets that seem to accompany such scientistic endeavors as linguistics. For instance: "An episode like that of Tom's meeting with Broadbrim, represented by *Y*, can be added with a plus sign to any episode, though not in such a manner that it is tied to any of the arrows: A → B → C → D — [+ Y] → E → F → etc."

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understanding of so exact and severe an order as Sachs's, it is a pleasure to engage in. One should become a better critic of fiction for having read *Fiction and the Shape of Belief*. From now on, no fiction critic can be excused for not recognizing how deeply involved he is in the practise of moral philosophy—not having right opinions about literature and ethics, but putting those opinions into practise. To be a practical critic of fiction is to be a practising moralist of a very subtle kind. Whoever says anything worth listening to about a novel worth reading speaks not only with literary knowledge and taste but also with moral discrimination. He takes the ethical risk. Here is an example of how Sachs does it:

> In the digression just discussed, value judgments are derived directly from either of two sources and indirectly from a third. First, there are the value judgments made by the old man himself at a point when we still accept him as trustworthy, as when he condemns the life of a gambler or his own youthful ingratitude to his father. . . . Second are the judgments derived from Tom's disagreement in thought and action with the old man, as when he argues with him about human nature or rushes down the hill to rescue Jenny from Northerton. . . . Finally, value judgments are tenuously affected by the fact that their arguments align Tom and the old man with previously established ethical agents; the old man's insistence on being superior to human passion, for example, connects him to a certain extent with Square, who is unreservedly ridiculed for the same belief; he also shares the elder Blifil's prejudice against charity, and some of the obloquy heaped upon him, for somewhat similar reasons.

None better, I'd say.

Perhaps some day Sachs will turn his attention to *Ulysses*. If anyone can explain how Joyce's beliefs operate in that book (and whether they operate successfully), Sachs can. The job needs doing for the benefit of skeptics like me who resist received opinion and think the trouble with *Ulysses* is precisely its author's beliefs. Moreover, doing it would expand Sachs's theory considerably, and would put him to a severer test than he has yet set himself. He has demonstrated how intricately the ethical beliefs and fictional practises of the narrator of *Tom Jones* are connected, and Fielding openly talks about these matters. How very intricate is *Ulysses*, whose maker never says a mumbling word to us! *Ulysses* is the great bastion of fictional estheticians, and Sachs is just the man to capture it for moral philosophy (or, as I fondly hope, to undermine it so that it collapses). After that—who knows?—all literature, all art, may be regained from that elegant construct of German idealism, esthetics, and reincorporated into ethics, from which it was torn and which needs it.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Fiction Chronicle

When I last wrote the "fiction chronicle" for this journal, I raised the war-cry of "Three cheers for the Puritans, and may they soon return to us!" One or two people, subsequently, asked if I really meant this absurd or shocking sentiment. At the time, it was not said with total seriousness; now, after another immersion in the ocean of contemporary fiction, I am not sure if I should not mean it very seriously indeed. It does seem to me that the liberation of literature—and of life also, of course—from the sexual taboos of the 19th century has entirely failed to produce the genuinely "liberating" effects which the pioneers looked for. The expectation, I suppose—one of the basic expectations of 20th-century liberalism—was that when people stopped suppressing sex, or hiding it, or wrapping it up in euphemisms and periphrases, they would become cheerful, reasonable, "normal" about it; they would assign to it its "proper place" but no more and no other; they would, in a word, stop fussing about it. I don't think this is too gross a caricature of an assumption you can detect in H. G. Wells and Havelock Ellis, Forster and Lawrence and a good many more. There is no need, alas, to emphasize how far we are still from that state of affairs; but to my mind the situation is worse than that. It is not that we are proceeding toward the goal rather more slowly than had been hoped; we are proceeding with considerable rapidity straight away from it. The formula "more frankness, less fuss" must be reversed; "more frankness, more fuss" is the reality. And also—which is more serious for literature—"more frankness, less truth." For if one can say that the picture of life provided by a Thackeray or a Trollope is falsified to some degree because sex is not allowed in it, I doubt if that falsity is any greater—I suspect it is incomparably smaller—than the falsity of such a work as Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. I cite this (which I haven't read yet, so my judgment is a matter of "doubt" and "suspect" only) as being, at the moment, the currently notorious exemplar of a process which began, one might say, with Henry James's wistful envying of the freedom of the French novelist in the 1880's, compared with the restrictions on the British and Americans.

> The novel, moreover, among ourselves, is almost always addressed to young unmarried ladies, or at least always assumes them to be a large part of the novelist's public. This fact, to a French story-teller, appears, of course, a damnable restriction, and M. Zola would probably decline to take *au sérieux* any work produced under such unnatural conditions. Half of life is a sealed book to young unmarried

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ladies, and how can a novel be worth anything that deals only with half of life? These objections are perfectly valid, and it may be said that our English system is a good thing for virgins and boys, and a bad thing for the novel itself, when the novel is regarded as something more than a simple *jeu d'esprit*, and considered as a composition that treats of life at large and helps us to *know*.

It is beyond imagining what poor James would have said had he seen the end-products of those mild and legitimate aspirations; if we can suppose him still capable of articulate utterance after such an experience, he would probably have pointed out that what has gone wrong is not the "frankness" in itself, not the mere extension of permissible subject-matter, but the fact that the extension is still, all too obviously, self-conscious, unnatural. You can still hear, as it were, the grinding of the cog-wheels as the gears are changed, when the writer embarks on "sex." There is even a special language for it, a kind of rhapsodical pseudo-poetry which sticks out a mile from the everyday prose around it. Or else there is the obverse of this, the conscientious four-letter toughness and nastiness. Of both of these, it has to be said, the main begetter in English was Lawrence, and the decisive public event—for Britain, at any rate—was the trial and acquittal of *Lady Chatterley* some four years ago. Floods of nonsense were talked at that trial; the prosecution lost, one may suspect, because its nonsense was a fraction sillier than the defense's. But the whole thing was basically tragic—it was comic only on the surface—for in few writers has the gap been wider between the kind of admiration and following that the writer would have wanted and the kind he actually received, than it has been in Lawrence. The influence of his works after his death has been a sadly unchanged continuation of his life; for that was full of misunderstandings and repudiations, discipleships which went wrong and disciples who were rejected, and in the same spirit Lawrence would have despised and spewed out his academic admirers, would have found the defense of *Lady Chatterley* even more repulsive than the prosecution, and would have been genuinely shocked (he was very capable of being shocked) by nine-tenths of the writing which owes its "freedom," in large measure, to himself.

In that writing he would detect, I think, a pervasive quality of *posturing*. The profound uneasiness of the writing, the way it oscillates between the crude and the lyrical—and both intensely self-conscious—seems of that kind of uneasiness which reflects a similar quality in its author. There is a profitable field, and an unexplored one, as far as I know, for the researcher into the sociology of literature, in the publicity build-ups that surround the pushing of a new novel into the world: the hand-outs to reviewers, the blurbs, and above all the pictures of the authors. Most of these last, in the novels now before me, seem to have as their selling-line the insistence that here is no bookish man of letters, no indoor meditator: here is a real Man. One of them

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shows him in a sort of Canadian lumberman's garb—all very chesty and great out-of-doors. Another presents what looks like a harmless British youth doing his best to look like Norman Mailer doing *his* best to look like a rugged and formidable warrior: tousled hair, craggy profile, and all the rest of the Mailer stage-props. They all go back, I suppose, to the Hemingway prototype (or was Jack London the real pioneer?), and they all evoke irresistibly that ancient crack of whoever-it-was, urging poor Ernest to stop hiding behind the false hair on his chest. The hair on *his* chest was doubtless real, and so, for all I know, is all the hair on all the chests of his imitators; but the silly adolescent pose is a true if trivial index of this uneasy posturing, and the effects of it on literature are not so trivial.

It is mainly in male authors that the posturing seems obligatory (though I'm not so sure of that, now I've written it; I can think of some female ones, but I'd better not name them); and so it may not be coincidence that a quite unfair proportion of the interesting, the distinguished, the *literate* writing among the fiction I have received is the work of women. Three in particular: two volumes of short stories by Flannery O'Connor and Nadine Gordimer, and one novel so short as to be almost a short story, by Elizabeth Spencer.[1] These are what I call literature. They are, that is, works of art, in which very distinctive personalities and clear, strongly held viewpoints on life are presented in such a way that they are absorbed into the imagined world of the fiction: there is no need, no temptation, to look outside that world for explanation or completion. Both the volumes of short stories are set in societies tortured and obsessed by the problems of race and colour: Nadine Gordimer's in South Africa, Flannery O'Connor's in the American South. But they make a remarkable contrast in this with the work of some other writers on race, more heavily publicized: James Baldwin, for instance. In him, the agony is being exploited—used as a screen on which to project a vast magnification of some personal disorder; in these stories, it has its place, neither played down nor softened, but viewed and felt as it has to be by real and ordinary people who must go on living in such a society. Flannery O'Connor's stories are fiercer, more fanatical than Nadine Gordimer's, and in some of them hysteria is not far away; she is capable of greater intensity, but pays for it by a lack of pure serenity at the centre of tragedy, such as Gordimer achieves superbly in a story called "A Company of Laughing Faces," which describes a young girl on a seaside holiday in which nothing "real" seems to happen to her in spite of her desperate efforts to persuade herself she is enjoying it all—until, right at the end, she has a glimpsed vision of a boy drowned in a pool. That is a moment of pure lyrical poetry; O'Connor's poetry is grotesque and neurotic, but it might be said to hit harder: and if it does,

[1] EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE, by *Flannery O'Connor*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $4.95. NOT FOR PUBLICATION, by *Nadine Gordimer*. Viking Press. $4.95. KNIGHTS AND DRAGONS, by *Elizabeth Spencer*. McGraw-Hill. $3.95.

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this is because her writing is clearly the work of an authentically religious writer, Catholic but not obtrusively or aggressively so (in which respect I found the introduction by Robert Fitzgerald, which *is* obtrusively Catholic, unfortunate and misleading). Now and then, the fierce contempt for liberal humanist do-gooders on the one hand and hellfire Biblical sectarians on the other seemed to me to twist and bias her vision—as it does in "The Lame Shall Enter First," a story of enormous power, but power warped and cruel; pity, for once, is lost in anger and scorn. It is certainly a strange world her stories live in: I never cease to wonder (speaking as an alien) at the American South as its writers portray it. Is it "really like that"? I wonder naïvely—or is it as much the invention of untypical geniuses as the wind-tortured moorlands, peopled by demons in human shape, of *Wuthering Heights*? Something that O'Connor herself said (quoted in Fitzgerald's introduction) seems to suggest that this is the case. "I doubt," she said, "if the texture of Southern life is any more grotesque than that of the rest of the nation, but it does seem evident that the Southern writer is particularly adept at recognizing the grotesque; and to recognize the grotesque you have to have some notion of what is not grotesque, and why."

Gordimer's stories keep much closer to what one had thought the real world was like: she is capable, therefore, of an accurate, undistorted social satire which is not in O'Connor's range—see, for instance, "The Worst Thing of All," the story of the return to South Africa of a woman theatrical genius become world-famous and her impact on the associates of her early obscurity. Gordimer is cooler, less fevered; one might almost have guessed, if one didn't know, that Flannery O'Connor died young of a terrible disease, for there is something in her prose which seemed to me very close to the poetry of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath—the poetry of exposed and tortured nerve-ends. . . .

Nothing of that in Elizabeth Spencer's *Knights and Dragons,* a cool witty elusive *conte* about Americans in Italy, the flavour of which I can best convey by saying that both Jane Austen and Henry James would have acknowledged a kinship: this, they would have said, is at least a work in the tradition we were part of. It is about a woman who has divorced her husband, left him in America and taken a job in the American consulate in Rome; and there she is loved (platonically) by the consul, has a shadowy affair with a touring American academic, catches him out—or seems to—in some peculiar deceptions, and encounters some odd experiences which might be hallucinations or might be hauntings, and all the time *is* "haunted" by her ex-husband across the Atlantic, who never "appears" in the story but in another way dominates it. He is the dragon; she the lady; the touring academic (and the consul?) are the ineffective knights. The dragon, I think, is not slain. This is a book to which I want to award some

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highly unfashionable, probably damaging epithets—words such as *elegant* and *civilized*—I hope Miss Spencer will realize they are intended as complimentary.

While we are on short stories, there are two other collections of them which may deserve mention: Pierre Gascar's *Women and the Sun*, and Alberto Moravia's latest assortment, *The Fetish*.[2] Both seem to me to fail—fail, that is, in comparison with O'Connor and Gordimer, but for opposite reasons. *Women and the Sun* is clearly the work of a serious writer, who has a vision and is trying to convey it: but he is trying too hard, his symbolism is laid on inches thick and his meanings are shouted at you in the stories' endings—so that eventually the achieved significance is much smaller than the intended. Moravia's collection is as nearly *in*significant, totally, as any work could be: the word is to be taken in its literal meaning—really without making a sign, or impressing a seal, on or of anything. These stories are what an experienced typewriter, if you gave it the minimum of thought and volition, would turn out on its own: dry mechanical nasty little anecdotes, with only the faintest whiff of a thought or emotion hanging over them—and that whiff only one of hatred and contempt for women and love. Like Maupassant in that: but Maupassant had at least a monkey ingenuity and vigour. These stories have not even those. They make a sad example of what happens when professionalism, instead of being the technical skill that should serve, becomes a power which destroys.

Between Anthony C. West's *The Ferret Fancier* and Alan Sharp's *A Green Tree in Gedde*[3] there is nothing really in common except that they are both set in the Celtic countries of Britain—West's in Northern Ireland and Sharp's in Scotland—and they make a splendid object-lesson on how to, and how not to, write about sex. *The Ferret Fancier*, which I found a remarkably absorbing and moving work, is in one sense about nothing *but* sex: it tells of the growing-up of a boy in a rural Irish community and of his love-hate, fear-attraction relationship with the vicious bloodthirsty beautiful ferret he owns; it evokes a largely physical way of life in terms almost entirely physical, and the whole thing is impregnated with the sense of living and growing bodies. The writing has a kind of dense richness exactly matching that of the fertile green country it has to do with. The sense of place, then, is as strong as that of bodily life: they are indeed the same, as they should be. To pair *A Green Tree in Gedde* with this remarkable book is grossly unfair to poor Mr. Sharp (he is the author whose blurb-picture makes him look like Britain's answer to Mailer); for it seems as if he, whose first novel this is, has been caught in the toils of literature-as-commerce almost before he began. This book, it seems, is being translated into goodness knows how many languages before pub-

[2] WOMEN AND THE SUN, by *Pierre Gascar*. Little, Brown. $4.95. THE FETISH, by *Alberto Moravia*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $4.95.

[3] THE FERRET FANCIER, by *Anthony C. West*. Simon and Schuster. $4.95. A GREEN TREE IN GEDDE, by *Alan Sharp*. New American Library. $5.00.

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lication; it is clearly destined for the not-quite-pornography range (the *Peyton Place* bracket, one might call it) in which, I suppose, the big money lies. One should think of it, really, as a phenomenon of international trade, not of literature—as the equivalent in print of those large sleek objects, all the same everywhere except for variations on the surface, which form the signs of 20th-century living in prosperous communities: the refrigerators, cars, TV sets, and the rest of them—and among them, a novel or two like this. The sexy bits come on at predictable intervals; the four-letter words are dutifully peppered around: and yet there is a strange unhappy lifelessness about it, enormously different from the vitality of *The Ferret Fancier*. "Sex in the head" would have been Lawrence's diagnosis; and it would have been right. He would also have noted—and again the contrast is striking with *The Ferret Fancier*—the absence of any real evocation of place: the Scotland which is supposed to be a potent presence (the book is archly dedicated to a town in Scotland) is in fact hardly there at all—there is no feeling for what makes Scotland an entity, a different thing from England. There is clearly some profound connection between the power to convey sense of place and that to render the life of the body: if you have one, and only if you have it, you are likely to have the other.

Next I have three novels, two German and one English, all of which, in their various ways, may be said to be novels concerned with history and with public events. The two Germans—Böll's *The Clown* and Günter Grass's *Dog Years*[4]—make me wonder—as I have wondered before over German novels of recent years, including some earlier ones by these two writers—if contemporary Germans (West Germans, anyway) have *any* subject other than the national guilt—the shame of Nazism and the horror of the gas-ovens. Certainly, the writers are full of it, obsessed by it. They nag away at the wellfed burgesses of Bonn; they shout and scream perpetually into those well-plugged ears: "*This* is the charnel-house your prosperity is built on, *this* is the bad smell you are stopping your nostrils at!" A good thing, no doubt, for German society that there should be these reminding voices—but whether it is good for the writers and their writings, is another matter. It seems to generate an angry impotence, a scoring of easy triumphs, a pharisaical superiority. In Böll's novel, the Clown himself, a seedy comic dropping steadily down into alcoholic collapse, is presented as the conscience of his society. All the others are rich, philistine, hypocritical, hiding their Nazi pasts under a coating of democratic sympathies. *The Clown,* I thought on the whole, was moving in an acrid, self-pitying way—but the self-pity, valid enough as part of the character himself, seemed at times to reach into, and throw doubts on, his role as symbol of conscience: as if the conscience were pitying itself (and enjoying doing so) for feeling so deliciously guilty—and so safely helpless. The other

[4] THE CLOWN, by *Heinrich Böll.* McGraw-Hill. $5.00. DOG YEARS, by *Günter Grass.* Harcourt, Brace and World. $6.95.

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German novel, Grass's *Dog Years,* takes what one might call the other way—not the self-pitying, acidly Hamlet-ish way, but the way of vast Gothic laughter and massed-up detailed grotesquerie. It covers the years of Nazi triumph and disaster and their aftermath largely through the imagined biography of a dog—the black dog Prinz that had once belonged to the Führer, till it deserted him from the bunker in Berlin. There are many other threads in this large crowded exhausting novel, and a fine variety of narrative techniques, including a phantasmagoric trial which made me suspect that Herr Grass has studied his James Joyce. The result I found impressive, undeniably, but not entirely convincing. This may be in part a matter of language: in every sense, this is an intensely Teutonic work, and I imagine that such things as "Fuhrerdogbreakthrough" may sound less clumsy, and more comic, in their native tongue. But—"the gentlemen protest too much, methought": neither this book nor *The Clown* manages to face the subject, the guilt and disaster of their people, quite *straight. The Clown* evades it with irony and self-pity; *Dog Years* with a proliferation of fantasy and a harsh gigantic laughter. It may be many generations before any German, who looks at all at what Auschwitz stands for, can look at it straight.

As for the English novel, Raymond Williams' *Second Generation,*[5] no one could ever accuse it of not looking straight: neither fantasy nor irony has any place in it—but would that they had! Williams is a British culture-historian of some note, one of a kind (rather than group) considerably influential in postwar Britain. They are mostly working-class in origin (any analysis in British society must begin with class); they have lifted themselves out of their class by their brains, via scholarships and lectureships; they know themselves to be thus declassed, and are guilty and uneasy about it; they are Left-wing (Methodist rather than marxist) in political sympathies but highbrow in culture (hence, at the time I write this, they are in dreadful disarray over a Labour government's awarding of decorations to the Beatles); they owe allegiances more or less direct to Matthew Arnold, Lawrence, Leavis, and Orwell; they are in a perpetual unhappy see-saw between their theoretical admiration and love for the common people and their real detestation and scorn of almost everything the real common people, in contemporary society, actually like; they try to balance this see-saw by arguing that the vile tastes of the modern masses are not their true tastes at all but are imposed on them by a vast conspiracy of advertisers, newspaper owners, TV proprietors, and suchlike villains; they cling, nevertheless, to a grim dim faith that somehow, sometime (perhaps through education, with themselves as teachers) these villains will be defeated and the "cultural revolution" will get on the right road again; they are, in short, very representative specimens of our prosperous, chaotic, well-meaning and ill-acting so-

[5] SECOND GENERATION, by *Raymond Williams.* Horizon Press. $4.95.

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ciety . . . Perhaps I should not have begun reviewing a work of fiction with a sociological analysis; but it is not without significance that I have done so, for the truth is that as fiction *Second Generation* scarcely exists, it is so irredeemably flat and grey, its "characters" so wooden. Its general tone may be fairly gauged by a passage like this:

> Kate worked more than nine hours on the report she had promised; first in the library, then telephoning people, then calling on two Labour economist friends in the university, who could help her interpret some of the facts she had collected. The whole problem got steadily more complicated, in the course of the day, and by seven she was tired and confused. She had got a sort of outline, but whether it was what Harold wanted, or anything that could really help him, she couldn't now judge.

That passage comes on page 95; and long before the end, some 250 pages later, I too, like Kate, was "tired and confused," I too "had got a sort of outline," but had got no more. Life *is* often like that, and such work as Kate's is both necessary and valuable; but only an extraordinary genius could give incandescence to such greyness. Williams' novel is dim grey throughout; it should have been straight reporting or straight sociology. As a novel of people involved in history and in public events, it is neither excited enough nor angry enough.

I end with two novels concerned with colonial or ex-colonial societies of the British or ex-British Empire. The first is set in Malaya, the second in Jamaica.[6] With both these parts of the world, as it happens, I have some acquaintance—indeed, I am living in the second one now—and I am prepared to believe that I may have been more interested in the novels for that reason than other readers are likely to be. But not too much so, I think. Burgess' *The Long Day Wanes*, a trilogy about the last days of colonial rule in Malaya, will probably have the wider appeal, although (or because) it is not the better book. The trouble here, I suspect, is over-rich material. For south-east Asia is enormously rich material—rich in colour, smell, sound, variety of races and cultures and faiths, relics living and dead of ancient diverse pasts, tragedy and farce—and Burgess splashes about in it all too loudly and joyously. Too many people, too many grotesque or horrific events, too much working hard for the belly-laughs. But the laughs are many and real—and it isn't, by any means, all exaggerated out of focus. Caricature, undeniably—but consistent caricature. What it does convey is a feeling of enjoyment—a feeling that in spite of all this is a wonderful and fascinating people and land.

—Which is not, I am afraid, the impression that Orlando Patterson's *Children of Sisyphus* conveys of Jamaica. His novel is concerned with the dwellers in the worst slums of Kingston—and there are no worse anywhere—and in particular with the members of that tragic

[6] THE LONG DAY WANES, by *Anthony Burgess*. Norton. $6.95. THE CHILDREN OF SISYPHUS, by *H. Orlando Patterson*. Houghton Mifflin. $4.00.

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religious sect, the Rastafarians, who dream of the divine ship which is to take them out of the filth of Kingston to the Earthly Paradise of Ethiopia, where the God-Emperor Haile Selassie will welcome them to His Heaven. *Children of Sisyphus* records the desperate, hopeless attempts of some of the slum-dwellers to get out of them; it records also the utter indifference of prosperous Jamaicans to this misery in their midst. In all countries for which tourism is an industry, there is of course a great gulf between the land as presented in the tourist publicity and the land as lived in by the mass of the people: but in no country that I know of is the gulf so vast or so shocking as it is in Jamaica. Or so unnoticed by the tourists themselves. For the trouble is that the only kind of tourism which Jamaica attracts or has the attractions for is the most static, brainless and incurious of all sorts of tourism: that which looks for no more than a lush hotel and a stretch of beach in front of it. The American tourists who come to Jamaica's north coast are, almost literally, in a different land from that which Patterson's book describes, though they are only, as the crow flies, some thirty miles away. A real mountain-range lies between, and also a symbolic one, enormously higher than the real. *Children of Sisyphus* is not, perhaps, a good novel; its characterization is crude and its narrative violent. (But so, on the other hand, are the people and lives it describes.) It is, though, a good piece of angry, rightly angry, reporting: the novel used as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Dickens used it, as a vehicle of protest and an engine for change.

JOHN SIMON

Between Puppet and God

THE ROMANTICS YEARNED FOR ESCAPE, but their facile flight never took them beyond the past, the future, or a more or less fabulous, Utopian elsewhere. The problem, however, was to get away from a stifling self; so Musset's Fantasio yearned to shed his skin for an hour or two and become the nearest passer-by, so Büchner's Leonce saw his salvation in being able to gaze down at his own head. Pétrus Borel went so far as to call and consider himself a lycanthrope. But none succeeded in constructing an Other he might fully become.

It took a Rimbaud to begin systematical experimentation with turning the *je* into *un autre,* an Isidore Ducasse to make himself less real than his pen name, Comte de Lautréamont, the very name resonantly embodying *l'autre.* But it remained for Alfred Jarry to create

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a literary alter ego into whom his subsequent life was to disappear, stuffed as the final tribute into Ubu's greedy, omnivorous paunch. It is by making one's creation come to life—quite literally living it, as Jarry lived Ubu—that one achieves an art not for art's sake but for life's sake, even if that life is an ambulatory satire ruthlessly devouring one's own existence. Jarry died at thirty-four, of disease induced by drink, destitution, and uncompromising defiance.

Père Ubu, the ludicrous, fat petty bourgeois turned bestial despot over lands and lives, remains Jarry's supreme invention. He is a tyrannical meatball begotten by insubordinate schoolboys on an incompetent science teacher: what a group of classmates jotted down jeeringly into various notebooks, was later given its final form and appellation by its principal author, Jarry. Puerile distortion and Rabelaisian magnification spawned that comic but frightening monster, Ubu, from whom manifest and acknowledged lifelines lead to the creations of futurism, dadaism, surrealism; to Artaud's theatre of cruelty as to Beckett's and Ionesco's theatre of the absurd. By subterraneous but no less traceable connections, the spirit of Ubu is conveyed even to such distant and diverse theatres as those of Brecht the alienator, Ghelderode and Dürrenmatt the dark comedians, and Yeats the poetic masker, who was present in 1896 at that famous première of *Ubu Roi* that out-heroded *Hernani*.

For in Ubu man was remade: his grossness, cravings, and mindless cunning were cemented with laughter, and everything else simply left out. And once a new man is created, even if it is only a rabid homunculus with elephantiasis of the appetites, an old world falls to pieces around him and a new one into place. To put it another way: if man can be a mere depraved puppet and the puppet can become king, the world must be absurd. A new dispensation takes shape around Ubu, Dada, Godot—a new world. Jarry tried to bring this about in other ways, too, in writings which have remained even less well known than *Ubu Roi*. *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*[1] aims to fill in readers of English on all aspects of Jarry: without neglecting the Ubu plays, to reveal also, however foreshortened, Jarry the poet, the novelist, and the proto-scientist.

Not that such categories are particularly meaningful here. A novel by Jarry may, at every step, turn into a prose poem, a playlet, a Socratic dialogue, a quasi-scientific theorem. Rather, one should view the writings of Jarry as shuttling between a symbolist lushness (which was, after all, that of his artistic milieu) and a fiendishly deflating prosaism, an inspired antipoetry. Thus in 1899 he publishes *L'Amour absolu*, an opaque, convoluted piece of poetic prose in which he projects himself into the hero, Emmanuel Dieu—God. But in 1900 he reverts to Ubuizing with *Ubu enchaîné*. The same kind of alternation

[1] SELECTED WORKS OF ALFRED JARRY, edited by *Roger Shattuck* and *Simon Watson Taylor*. Grove Press. $7.95.

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obtains within individual works, indeed, within individual sentences: "Two watching women sway at the windswept windows like drying straitjackets." Antipoetry is redeemed by humor, hothouse symbolism by cleansing winds of absurdity.

These two aspects of Jarry's writing are susceptible of further heightening. When the poetico-absurd symbolism is raised to the next power, it yields an orgy of sex and sense, as when, in *Messalina,* the emblematic wooden phallus atop a Roman brothel sprouts wings and vanishes into the heavens in a lewd apotheosis. Conversely, when the crassly exaggerated common sense of the Ubu plays is intensified and broadened, it becomes an apocalyptic pseudo-science, in which advanced physics and mathematics blend with occultism, sacrilegiousness, and sheer fantasy. So in the fragment from *Faustroll* that begins, "God transcendent is trigonal and the soul transcendent theogonal, consequently trigonal also," and concludes, *"Homo est Deus."* When Jarry's imagination is at its peak, all four elements—symbolism, antipoetry, science, and orgasm—interpenetrate, and the result is a pornographic lyricism, an ecstatic scientism, a cosmic humor full of unlikely gravity, an incomparably sober hallucination.

Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor, two devoted Jarryites, have assembled, and to a large extent translated, a selection from the abundant *oeuvre* of Jarry (a truly complete edition, such as does not exist even in French, might comprise a dozen volumes). This compendium must suffer the fate of all decent anthologies: qualified approval. It is understandable, for instance, that in the dramatic section the editors should have wanted to cover new ground in the Ubu cycle; still, it is incomprehensible to me how the seminal *Ubu Roi* could have been omitted.

The writings on the theatre appear in full, and though many of Jarry's aristocratic, anti-realist, ritualistic yet simplified notions of theatre have found wide acceptance, much remains here that could be usefully pondered especially by the American stage. The section of the book devoted to "Essays and Speculations" contains some of Jarry's most biting satire as well as some of his most exhilarating pseudo-science. As an example of the latter we have a detailed and closely reasoned treatise on how to build a time machine; as an instance of the former, consider this excerpt from a priest's proposal to market "Lourdes Water for the Home": "At the sales office one can obtain for a slight deposit a needle shower, a bath tub, and . . . and . . . ah . . . various hydraulic and intimate mechanisms guaranteeing to devout ladies the birth of male offspring, or if so desired their non-birth, accompanied by the salvation of those innocent little souls thanks to, if I may put it thus, an anticipatory baptism before they see the light of day."

The section devoted to Jarry's verse is woefully incomplete, and, unlike the prose, poorly translated. Take, for example, these two lines

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of a sonnet: "Pour chacun de ses pas son orteil patagon / Lui taille au creux du sable une neuve pantoufle." Clearly the effect depends on the contrast of the highly cadenced movement and classicizing inversion with the banality of the content—the preposterousness of *patagon* stressed by the rhyming position and the fact that it rhymes with *parangon*. Now, as Stanley Chapman translates, we get "Father Ubu's patagonian footfalls impress / In the sand, with each toe, sable pumps—soled and heeled." Not only have the exigencies of meter and rhyme brought about pointless and confusing padding (the "sable" pumps being downright fractured French), but the serene stateliness of the rhythm has disintegrated into paroxysm. Even quantitatively, however, five poems cannot begin to convey Jarry's poetic achievement.

The largest single part of the book is devoted to fiction, and it is right that this should begin with selections from *Days and Nights,* a semi-autobiographical concatenation of trivial and dreary episodes from the waking life of a conscript with rapturous prose poems in which the hero escapes into dreams that become his true life. How perfectly the twenty-three-year-old Jarry, in this his first novel, blends the poetic, the mystical, and the comic: "His body walked beneath the trees, material, well-articulated; and some strange fluid essence was floating overhead, like a cloud made of ice—it must have been his astral body. And a more tenuous form was moving nearly a thousand feet higher up—his soul, perhaps—and a visible thread linked the two kites."

I regret the inclusion of selections from *Messalina,* a novel in which a certain ability to mould well-researched historical material barely compensates for a rather monotonously orgiastic tone and a lack of superior invention. I would have preferred something from *Le Surmâle,* at the climax of which the sexual super-athlete hero overcomes an electric love-inspiring machine and makes it fall in love with him; but the machine short-circuits, and the pair go down to a travesty of a *liebestod.*

The *clou* of this collection is the complete and lovingly annotated translation by Simon Watson Taylor of the *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician,* Jarry's most ambitious and complex work. This concerns the journeys of the hero, a sublime and ridiculous scientist (Faust and troll), accompanied by a bailiff who is both his pursuer and prisoner, and by a laconic baboon. They travel in a skiff that is really a sieve-like bedstead equipped to float on the water's skin—however, they mostly travel by land. They have many quaint encounters with Jarry's artistic friends and foes, who appear transformed into anything from islands to basket cases. In the end, the Doctor drowns, but continues to communicate his scientific discoveries to Lord Kelvin.

This "neo-scientific novel" is a repository of prose poems, parodies,

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lampoons, tributes, biographical and autobiographical references, artistic and scientific credos. Here, above all, Jarry develops furthest his science of "pataphysics," which is to metaphysics what that is to physics. This "science of imaginary solutions" examines "the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one" or to be "envisaged in place of the traditional one." Indeed, the whole novel is a fanciful application of some of the most advanced and daring (and sometimes equally fanciful) aspects of *fin-de-siècle* science. The conclusion of *Faustroll* is an elaborate piece of mathematics—or, perhaps, pathematics—by which the surface of God is calculated. It is demonstrated that God is the tangential point between zero and infinity.

Mr. Taylor has struggled gamely with material that defies translation, and has at least explained some of the puns, coinages, and other verbal tricks. His notes, though generally most helpful, have their moments of weakness, as when *une figue d'oreille* is translated as an "ear fig" and glossed in terms of an irrelevant Greek etymology, though it is merely a literal translation of the German *Ohrfeige,* a slap in the face. But all the translators—Taylor, Shattuck, Cyril Connolly, and two or three others—have done well enough by Jarry's elusively idiosyncratic diction, and Mr. Shattuck has contributed an introduction that is a paragon of pregnant concision. His love for Jarry has not diminished since he wrote about him in *The Banquet Years,* but there are fewer critical extravagances—the spelling "pataphysicks" itself has been streamlined into "pataphysics." Still, one has to take issue with the overwrought comment on *Faustroll:* "terms in which to judge its success or failure scarcely exist outside its own pages." This is to abrogate criticism a little too easily. As a novel, *Faustroll* is a failure, since it does not maintain enough forward thrust and bogs down in private references and preciosity. But as a collection of incidental felicities, as a spirited rejection of any sort of limitation physical or psychic, as plain transcendence of mortality, it remains an extraordinary accomplishment. Jarry almost convinces us of his worthiness to play his other favorite role, besides that of Ubu, the role of God.

Since Jarry loved puppets and understood German, it is a pity that he, apparently, did not know Kleist's provocative essay "On the Puppet Theatre." "Grace," wrote Kleist, "appears at its purest in that human frame which has either no consciousness at all, or an infinite one; that is, in the marionette or in the god." Whether Jarry was playing at the puppet, Ubu, or at God—whether, to speak pataphysically, he was heading for the zero of inhumanity or the infinity of godhead—he was always possessed of a satirical or lyrical grace. He is, as the *Selected Works* make clear, that fantastic phenomenon, a minor genius. If that is a contradiction in terms, so much the more appropriate to Alfred Jarry.

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LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

Poetry Chronicle[1]

To begin, I note with pleasure two new departures in the field of poetry translation. *Contemporary French Poetry* is essentially the product of the poetry workshop of the University of Iowa. All of the translators are teachers or young poets who have been associated with the workshop. The book's unusual appeal is owing to the variety and vivacity of its selections. Many French poets are represented, and the form of the poetry varies from the prose-poems of René Char and the tumbling free-and-easy rhythms of Pierre Reverdy to the more formal meters of Yves Bonnefoy.

I regret that the book is so encumbered with apparatus. Of some two hundred pages only sixty-five are allotted to the translations. The rest is comprised of the French versions of the poems, introduction, postface, notes, and an extensive "Selective Bibliography." All of these sections are useful, in themselves, but their combined weight threatens to smother the poems.

Czeslaw Milosz, a Polish poet who teaches Slavic Literatures at the University of California, is exclusively responsible for editing and translating *Postwar Polish Poetry*. The extraordinary vitality of this book makes me question the wisdom of many writers translating in collaboration. Most translations leave me feeling the frustration of one who is on the outside looking in. Even the translations of some of the best American and British poets seem to reduce English to a sort of lifeless Esperanto—no matter how faithfully this language renders the original, the poems lack the savor of the real thing. Milosz brings to poetry translation many rare virtues. He is a distinguished Polish poet in his own right and is personally acquainted with most of the poets represented. He is very much a part of the movement of which the book presents a cross-section. He has a keen insight into the many exciting directions that contemporary Polish poetry is taking, and this *awareness* gives the book a surprising coherence. Finally, he has learned to write a very lucid and expressive English.

[1] CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POETRY, edited by *Alexander Aspel* and *Donald Justice*. University of Michigan Press. $1.95. POSTWAR POLISH POETRY, edited by *Czeslaw Milosz*. Doubleday. $4.95. HARLEM GALLERY, by *M. B. Tolson*. Twayne Publishers. $4.00. TAPE FOR THE TURN OF THE YEAR, by *A R. Ammons*. Cornell University Press. $4.95. CORSON'S INLET, by *A. R. Ammons*. Cornell University Press. $3.95. SAINT THOMAS. POEMS, by *Tram Combs*. Wesleyan University Press. $4.00. FINDING THEM LOST AND OTHER POEMS, by *Howard Moss*. Scribner's. $3.50. THE SELECTED POEMS OF JOHN HOLMES. Beacon Press. $7.50. IDENTITIES, by *W. R. Moses*. Wesleyan University Press. $1.85.

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(Mr. Milosz' English prose style demonstrates an ear for appealing nuances that are bypassed by writers for whom English is the mother tongue. It is a style that reminds me of the special flavor of Joseph Conrad and Vladimir Nabokov, two other writers who came to English from Slavic origins.) All of these factors make him supremely well qualified to preserve, in translation, the life and spirit of the original poems.

Two unusually long (book-length) poems appear this quarter, *Harlem Gallery* by M. B. Tolson, and *Tape for the Turn of the Year* by A. R. Ammons. Both books immediately reveal the sort of technical virtuosity that commands a reader to keep on with it to the finish. Since readers of poetry, as a rule, have a rather short attention span, the usual repeated stanza form, or blank verse, grows tedious; it will not hold his interest for *two hundred pages*. Both Tolson and Ammons keep the eye moving down the page—from top to bottom—instead of horizontally. This gives the poems a forward-thrust of great energy and momentum. In *Harlem Gallery* all of the lines are centered on the vertical axis, and Tolson freely rotates long lines and short ones; in *Tape,* Ammons is confined to narrower (in both senses of that word) limits, since the entire poem was composed on a roll of adding-machine tape. In most other respects, the poems differ vastly, since *Harlem Gallery* was written over a period of ten or fifteen years, whereas *Tape* is a sequence of daily entries in a journal ranging over slightly more than a month in the poet's life.

Karl Shapiro, in his introduction to *Harlem Gallery,* makes the highest possible claim for Tolson: "A great poet has been living in our midst for decades and is almost totally unknown, even by the literati, even by poets." He says further that Tolson's art has been ignored mainly because he is an enemy to the " 'Graeco-Judaic-Christian' culture" of our ruling establishment: "He is, to use the term he prefers, an Afroamerican poet, not an American Negro poet accommodating himself to the tradition. . . . *Tolson writes in Negro.*"

It may well be that my problem in reading this book is that I am not Negro. Well, I have just spent a year teaching at the college in St. Thomas. The student body here is about ninety per cent Negro, and nearly every Negro land I can think of is represented, including Africa and the States. Though English is the mother tongue for nearly all of the students, there is so much variety of accent and dialect, I have to struggle to understand what they are saying in class (as indeed, they must struggle to understand each other). Africa is the land of *their* racial heritage, quite as much as it is Tolson's. I have tried to get the students—and some of them are promising poets—to become interested in reading Tolson's book. They do not understand him. He simply does not speak their language. How then can it be said that Tolson writes *in Negro*?

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Perhaps this is an unfair criterion; it may be that poetry in our time is for The Few, and this handful of readers is an intellectual elite that prevails over racial or religious or national barriers. For my own part, as a reader, I feel that *Harlem Gallery* does have some of the hallmarks of an important work of art, and I share the sort of literary wishful-thinking that makes me want to support Mr. Shapiro's enthusiastic response. (And then there is the matter of paying the Negro artist in America his due.)

The book has astonishing linguistic range, a vital new imagery, and much technical excitement. It is a strange hybrid of many dialects. But there seem to be only traces of *Negro* slang and dialect. The characters are literary oddities: they sparkle like ornaments in the vast mosaic of the poem. The book is weighed down with literary allusions; it is top-heavy with the tradition and special learning. While it is true that often Tolson successfully ridicules the cultural establishment from which he derives so much of his imagery, more often he is too steeped in that tradition to work against it. There are many passages that are cluttered with references to poets, painters, composers—and their works. Examples range from Homer through Shakespeare to the present. Some lines are so thick with allusions they become opaque; a reader cannot find his way into their meanings, their sayings. The tradition that the poem supports *is* basically that of the "Graeco-Judaic-Christian culture," and not a distinctly Negro heritage. I think Tolson defines his own difficulty in breaking away from the dominant culture of America in a few lines of the poem:

> I was a half-white egghead with maggots on the brain.
> I ate my crow,
> for the unconscious of the artist
> cannot say to itself *No.*

The literary milieu which gave him birth now refuses to set him free.

The Trinidadians and British Guianese I have met in St. Thomas have a more seminal dispute with Western Culture than any American Negro I have ever read, including Tolson and Baldwin. The Negroes of Trinidad and British Guiana have had Western Culture shoveled down their throats by the United Kingdom at closer range than the American Negroes. Some of the more outspoken among them dismiss the entire civilization arising from the Greeks as barbaric, and favor an Egypt-oriented definition of our cultural heritage. However absurd their claim, they at least offer a possibility for a new major direction and tradition for the modern world. Tolson does not offer this, so far as I can see.

Harlem Gallery is intended as a prelude (*Book I: The Curator*) to a much larger work. There are some sections that suggest in their clarity and razor-sharp irony that Tolson has it in him to become, and

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may well be on the way to becoming, a satirist of the first order. If he can find his position and his voice more distinctly outside the cultural fortress he is failing to undermine from within, I will be among the first to cheer as the walls come tumbling down.

It is clear from the two collections of Ammons' shorter poems (*Corson's Inlet* was published concurrently with *Tape* by Cornell University Press) that this poet usually gets his best results when he varies his line-lengths over the widest possible range. Why, then, does he restrict himself in *Tape* to a limitation of form that cuts off much of his technical power? A reader's first inclination is to assume that he resorted to the gimmick of adding-machine tape to keep pace with the current fad of pop art. And certainly there is no harm in borrowing honestly from the other contemporary arts. But all this is misleading, for if there is a pioneer in the technique of poetry today, it is A. R. Ammons. *Tape* is a daring book. It takes valiant risks. At the time of its composition, the poet must have doubted whether the book would be able to attract and hold a single reader, much less a publisher:

> . . . the denominator
> here may be too low: the
> lines may be
> too light, the song
> too hard to hear:
> still, it's not been
> easy: it's
> cost me plenty . . .

Ammons has become dissatisfied with the poem that is small enough in scope to be worked into a perfected artifact through many revisions:

> . . . lines that can be
> gone over (and over)
> till they sing with
> pre-established rightness . . .
> I've hated at times the
> self-conscious poem . . .

He seems to feel that if a poem is re-worked too many times, it recedes from experience, loses its naturalness, the sense of life taking place on the page, now. He wants the movement of the poem to get directly in step with the turnover of experience in his mind, to capture the many sides of himself that work at cross-purposes in life, and embrace them in the process of dynamic interchange and imbalance, rather than contrive a sense of balance and comfortable order by squeezing a poem into a single dimension of experience. To give an accurate sampling of Ammons' *Tape,* I would have to suggest some-

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thing of the bulging spans of emotion, the multiplicities of experience he is able to exhale, all-of-a-piece, in each massive breathful of the poem.

In *Corson's Inlet*, the collection of shorter poems, Ammons is searching for a medium—a fabric of line and rhythm—that can assimilate into itself the most complex and intricate rhythms of nature: alterations in the shapes of dunes, feeding habits and migrations of birds—singly or in multitudes, tentacular shiftings and gropings of pea vines. His movement must remain fluid at all times to keep in touch with the actual phenomena adorned (never merely described) by the poem. He will not permit his medium to become fixed, not even to the extent of evolving consistent inconsistencies: "So that I make no form of formlessness."

All this Ammons has achieved with astonishing success in the title poem, "Corson's Inlet." I believe it is a poem of the first importance. Every block of language exhibits an arrangement that appeals to the eye and the ear, every passage is somehow different from every other, yet all passages partake of some basic rhythm or movement that permeates the poem as a whole. The problem of form is not solved until the poem is completed. The poet, with extraordinary nimbleness, discovers and re-discovers the movement of his line—and nothing can be preconceived, all must emerge instantaneously from the flux of language and the interplay of lines. The speaker in this poem is continually beset by pressures to take the easy way out, to settle for obvious solutions or tidy exits. But his vision overrides every hazard, as he continues to find in the natural setting a pattern for his thought as well as for the movement of his verse:

> I see narrow orders, limited tightness, but will
> not run to that easy victory:
> still around the looser, wider forces work:
> I will try
> to fasten into order enlarging grasps of disorder . . .

Many readers, and some good ones, reject nearly all free verse as an abdication of form. Ammons has adopted free verse in quest of a more meaningful and porous order than traditional forms could possibly allow. While this poem balances exquisitely between form and flow, between order and disorder, the poet's preference for the maximum freedom of movement and the minimum of constraint appears early in the poem:

> . . . the walk liberating, I was released from forms,
> from the perpendiculars,
> straight lines, blocks, boxes, binds
> of thought
> into the hues, shadings, rises, flowing bends and blends
> of sight . . .

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In a couple of poems, notably "Lines" and "Prodigal," there is a tendency to multiply abstract verbiage until it recoils upon itself. But most of the poems have a vivid and exuberant language, a memorable language that never becomes merely flat or inert. In a series of confrontations with nature, in various poems, Ammons expresses his distrust for the tendency of his own mind to violate the integrity of natural objects by transforming them into mere symbols for poetry, and he chides other poets for trying to superimpose aesthetic formulas on living experience ("no humbling of reality to precept") and for contriving melodrama out of natural events ("no arranged terror: no forcing of image, plan, or thought: no propaganda"). Usually, Ammons maintains a saintly reverence before trees, birds, waters—and with a sort of fond protectiveness and self-derisiveness he cherishes their secret identities in the lines that conclude the book:

> . . . so I look and reflect, but the air's glass
> jail seals each thing in its entity:
> no use to make any philosophies here:
> I see no
> god in the holly, hear no song from
> the snowbroken weeds: Hegel is not the winter
> yellow in the pines: the sunlight has never
> heard of trees: surrendered self among
> unwelcoming forms: stranger,
> hoist your burdens, get on down the road.

This poet is at his best as he moves between the worlds of fact and idea. The vivid extra dimension that each world imparts to the other, at such moments, is exceeded by the poet's luminous ambience as he journeys between them.

St. Thomas, a collection of poems by Tram Combs, is a new kind of reading experience. About half-way through the book, I realized I could not remember distinctly many of the separate poems I had read. It seemed as if I had been wandering through an enchanted forest of impressions. The voice in the poems varies but little from page to page; it is a slow-paced mellifluous reverie.

Many of the poems are untitled. Frequently, several short pieces are scattered about a single page. It is not always clear when one poem ends and another begins. Nor is the book divided into sections. (The poems do, however, tend to group themselves around certain favorite subject-areas: cats, sailors, native West-Indians, religious hymns.) Tram Combs suggests that, for him, poetry is an unbroken stream of imagination, that rises and falls like breathing, but that resists being shunted into rigid compartments. I find myself wishing that more units would solidify into self-contained wholes, but I can appreciate the way in which many loose-jointed tissues of verse send

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off rays or waves into adjacent sections, stirring a sort of magical flux between them.

Combs's sensibility radiates much warmth and tenderness, especially in the many poems to lizards and cats. I've never read a poet with as much reverence and true adoration for cats as this one. His world bubbles over with cats—they seem to have captured that special place in his life that most poets fill with children or hobbies:

> I flung up my arm half from sleep,
> my fingers dangled past the bed . . .
> and a soft rasp attached to them, a cat's tongue,
> file of love.
> I drew back,
> and thought deliciously of the dark presences
> amorphous tiny
> two black kittens
> back of the couch
> in the next room
> with enormous blue eyes
> wondering
> stillnesses

Few poets devote as much ingenuity to the visual pattern of a poem as Tram Combs. It isn't just a matter of trick-typography, as in so much of Cummings' work. A poem may be shaped like a star, a diamond, an hourglass—after the manner of English poets of the Seventeenth Century—and usually a reader feels that there is some quality in the rhythm of experience in the poem that justifies the form chosen. Among the best of these are the devotional poems, very tender hymns that combine the simplicity and directness of George Herbert with Hopkinsesque word-play.

The mannerism of double-spacing between words, a sort of trademark for this poet's work, seems peculiar and arbitrary at first glance. I felt the sort of impatience with it that I can remember feeling in response to José Garcia Villa's poems with commas after every word. But Mr. Combs's technique finally instills an attitude toward the language of poetry—the idea that one must listen for each word separately, and a kind of serenity and repose will arise from the sense of free space around the words.

In *Finding Them Lost,* by Howard Moss, the shorter descriptive poems with plants, animals, or natural settings at their center have much power to charm the reader. It is not a coincidence that a weed is the subject of one of the strongest poems, "The Snow Weed," since Moss seems deliberately and characteristically to avoid choosing subjects that have evident and ornate beauties. Unlike the imagists, who rely on *the thing itself* to generate its own distinctive aura in the

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poem (the poem tries to become a passive transmitter: it must keep hands off the object and let it speak for itself—a crying out of pure identity or isness), Moss selects things that are provisionally drab and vague—a wave, a cricket, a weed—then with the free play of his imagination (*and,* let me add, a keen attention to fact) he discovers the unexpected resources inherent in the ordinary.

The uplift of "The Snow Weed" is achieved slowly ("I let it hatch"). The poet gently leads us through a sequence of images that have the effect of unfolding, oddly, as successive layers of snow fall upon the weed:

> A fan-shaped skeleton, or wide whisk broom,
> A peacock tail but colorless.

The poem rises, finally, to a quiet epiphany:

> It swayed upon its root, remaining firm,
> And bore a second blossoming of storm.

The snow weed is a generic image that typifies a central stratagem of Moss's art. In many of the poems in this volume, a scene or image is filtered through his imagination, and is revealed sequentially through a series of shifts in perspective which translate the subject; similarly, each layer of snow falling upon the weed delivers, or liberates, *its* peculiar life. This method may owe something to the poet's keen interest in film techniques, which is evident in the long poem, "Movies for the Home."

Moss is at his best when he relates the spirit's struggle to cope with loss, as his book's title, *Finding Them Lost,* suggests. As he broods over his friend's death in "Water Island," grimly baffled by the look of the drowned man's face, his strong feeling for the man is somehow numbed by the raw confrontation with this "body like a log the wind rolled up to shore." His reverie becomes sidetracked by the spectral images of three animals: a horseshoe crab, an "endemic gull," and a heron. The animals emerge as lovely sacred beings in their own right, as they, accidentally it would seem, release the full volume of emotion felt for the dead friend:

> Going across
> That night, too fast, too dark, no one will know,
> Maybe you heard, the last you'll ever hear,
> The cry of the savage and endemic gull
> Which shakes the blood and always brings to mind
> The thought that death, the scavenger, is blind,
> Blunders and is stupid, and the end
> Comes with ironies so fine . . .

In the poems mentioned earlier, animals and plants are a world in-and-of-themselves. They, and the poems they inhabit, emit splendor,

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but they lack the amplitude that can impart the fullest sense of life. In "Water Island," the poet is stymied by the helplessness of loss, initially. But at last, the animals serve as mediators between the speaker and his profound experience; they contribute a vital life-enhancing dimension to the poem.

In the other deeply personal poems, "The Silences" and "The Fall," much power is achieved through restraint of emotion. In writing about himself (or a persona closely akin to himself), Moss resists the current trend toward garish self-exposure. "The Silences," a poem in six parts, is a voyage of the self through the purgatory of estrangement from a loved one. Like the animals in "Water Island," elements —air, frost, rain, moonlight, branches, lake-water—become conveyors of the poet's longings. Despite its length, the poem instills a breathless quality, like a drop of water clinging to a tip of leaf.

"The Fall," another poem depicting loss, is a delicate performance. It evokes a completely absorptive trance that deepens with each rereading. I think it is Howard Moss's finest poem; in its masterful control of repetitions and in the play of mystical refrain against piercingly direct plain statement it bears comparison with Roethke's "Waking" and Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." The snow of the refrain eerily transforms from a static ingredient of the setting, in the first stanza, to a hauntingly personified being, a protagonist in the human drama of the poem, at the end:

> Did I ever tell you what I meant to say?
> Or was I silent as this snowfall? Was I?
> How can I take your sudden darkness lightly?
> *Heavily snow is coming down slowly.*
>
> The world is being shut away now. Surely
> You felt what I felt. Lately, early
> In the morning you rise up from the earth. Unearthly,
> *Heavenly snow is coming down slowly.*

For twenty-five years, John Holmes had been a good poet, and a steadily productive one, when his untimely death jolted the poetry world in 1962. As I thumb the pages of the *Selected Poems,* I can see why the poem "The Fortune Teller" took me (and swept me away) by surprise when I first read it in 1957. I had been reading this poet for years with lukewarm interest, and I remember feeling that while his subject matter was usually tame and his language lacked piquancy, there was often a pang of urgency in the voice of the poems that compelled me to read on. I sensed that Holmes had something remarkable to say to me—something personal about experience we mysteriously had in common—but he couldn't plug his voice into the right outlet. He sang off-key. There are surprisingly few traces in the earlier work of the "tender and terrible" vision that blossomed suddenly and seized

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this poet out of himself in "The Fortune Teller" and in so many of the later poems. The early domestic poetry suffers from a smug sense of safety. What can go wrong, or right, in the world of the poem seems too conveniently settled in advance. The poems cannot accommodate much discomfort, much chaos.

In the selections from his third book, *The Double Root,* there *are* moments when he verges on the perilous abyss of the inner self, forecasting vaguely the central motif of his best work. The four stanzas beginning a long poem entitled "The Core" come as close as any lines in the early volumes to the poet's truest voice. (I think the fourth stanza would have ended the poem beautifully, but it goes on and on *and on*—his ear is simply not attuned to his voice yet.)

All children sound the same.
Walking today, I came
Near small boys counting loud
The words of a game.

A voice there seemed my son,
Again and again the one
I would know in any crowd.
But I knew none.

I thought, if he were dead
How always in my head
Would sound in any street
Something he said,

Until I could not bear
To walk out anywhere,
For fear that I might meet
His voice in air.

The terror of the unknown and the strange is more chilling when it emerges, unexpectedly, in oneself and one's loved ones. This insight is a direct link with the apocalypse of "The Fortune Teller": the discovery that the most lethal disasters may lurk behind the most commonplace experience, and deadly poison may spring at any moment from familiar and apparently calculated relationships. The closer to home, the greater the threat.

In "The Thrifty Elephant," "Death in the Back Yard," and "On a Magazine Picture of a Mass Burial" the peculiar blend of humor and terror marks the arrival of Holmes's most distinctive personal voice. The concluding image in "The Thrifty Elephant" projects an unforgettable picture of spirit maintaining itself intact under the burden of a grotesquely lame and dying carcass:

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Who's seen an old bull elephant lately, old
Red-eyed, foot-dragging, single-minded blunt-
Tusk, lugging his bones to the bones piled?

"On a Magazine Picture of a Mass Burial" is the one poem that makes no attempt whatever to soften the ghastliness of death. The surface lightness of tone and rhythms renders the nightmare landscape more terrible. The poem moves from the scene of a mass burial following an accident to a contemplation of mass-death in nuclear war:

What is there that people do in eighteens?
Sing, eat, sit in a bus, march in threes.
I could die, but eighteen is too many.
Forty thousand is incomprehensible,
Or thirty or sixty-five thousand deaths,
Or one death . . .

But this—we might as well all jump in,
Be the dead the dirt and the desolate . . .

Here is the sort of underplay of humor you find in *King Lear*. The grotesque ironies of statement heighten the tragic sense. The short snappy phrases and sentences, some of which read like advertising copy, suggest modern man's helplessness and impoverishment before the instruments of death he has constructed. By juggling the small numbers with the large ones, Holmes demonstrates the futility of the IBM or the computer grappling with the fact of death. This is the one death in Holmes's poetry from which there can be no escape, no salvation. (I might add that the images of death in John Holmes's work are unalterably fused in my mind's eye with the searing image of Holmes dying of cancer, portrayed in Anne Sexton's poem about him, "Somewhere in Africa." It's such a painful image to recall, I'm not at all sure that I'm grateful for it. But the poem is a touching benediction to Holmes's memory by one who clearly drew much of her poetic powers—her forthrightness certainly—from his influence.)

Identities, by W. R. Moses, is a first collection of poems by a man who has been writing and publishing poetry for over thirty years. In view of the many programs for publishing books of poems that have emerged in the last ten years, it's difficult to imagine why such a substantial poet as this did not find a publisher long before. A surprising number of poems in this book strike me as being fully realized works of art, and I rather feel as though I'm reading the collected poems of a long-established seasoned technician, rather than the work of a *new* poet in any sense. Yet I'm sure I must have read many of these poems

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when they appeared originally in periodicals, and practically none left a lasting impression in my memory.

Most of the poems achieve a slow, even pace, and emotional content is subdued. The poems do not have much immediate impact; they usually have to rely on repeated readings (and at least one slow reading) to get their full import across to the reader. Perhaps that is why book-publication of this poet's work has lagged.

It occurs to me, after reading many pages of Moses' work at a single sitting, that most of his poems gain power and authority from appearing in a collection; that is, the honesty and patience with which he examines experience, in poem after poem, instructs the reader in the special style of perception that is ideal for reading any one of them. And towards the end of the book the rewards are so great, and so different from what one has been led to expect from poetry, a reader begins to question and reassess some of the other kinds of goodness in poetry he has taken it for granted he admires.

In "Of Cabbages and Kings," the ruined pea vines are a metaphor; they represent art or other experience that is brought to a premature climax, instead of being nurtured to a slow, quiet, but intense ripening, such as this poet, and many of his poems, have undergone:

> The peas that I planted too late in Kansas
> Leaped to the light, into it, through it.
> They were all extension; they never thickened
> In stem enough, or darkened enough in leaf.

Many of the best poems in the book are "contemplations" of young boys engaged in sports: hunting, boating, baseball. "Boy at Target Practise: A Contemplation" celebrates the uniqueness of each event "in the world's swarm of things." The bullet holes in the tin cans are "new bits of subtraction," suggesting that vacancies, where formerly there was matter (like negative areas in a painting or silences in a poem), have unique identities too. This poem provides the book with its striking cover: a punctured tin can sitting near the bull's-eye (black) of a target (in red and white) bent at right angles. This example of pop art curiously enhances the book's emphasis on the fascination of random objects: wrecked autos, old clothes, mummies.

In "One Time on One River," Moses reminisces about a boyhood experience of getting stuck on a river:

> Why try to look out for a stump
> Under the surface, when one is hurrying home?
> The oar stroke that grated us home on the covered top
> No other stroke could undo. The boat hung still
> As the sky above it.

Most of the savored experience in this long poem happens to the boy incidentally as he waits on the water and contemplates an escape.

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Finally, the wish to escape is dissolved in the small beauties that engulf him:

> The struggle in darkness, shoving, shifting;
> The empty heaving at a useless fulcrum—
> I remember these. Growing silent
> And listening, so, to the smallest sounds of darkness,
> The plops and gurgles near, and the tiny
> Rustling and calling yonder in the dark shoreward—
> I remember that. What I do not remember
> Is ever feeling pine wood moving on pine wood
> Until we were off.

The poem, like so many in this volume, reaches beyond the given setting to imply an attitude to poetry and life. One needn't rush here and there to encounter experience; it is better to sit patiently and quietly in one place and wait for the experience to come to you, upon you, into you, through you, over you.

Moses' careful and graceful renderings of natural phenomena (always taking the identity of the objects described as primary before anything they may be taken to stand for) lends itself particularly well to fable and parable. The "message" arises subtly, but inevitably, from the pictured vision, usually late in the poem. The poem has examined the objects with such quiet precision, one little expects a piercing discovery that stretches to the limits of perception. The power of understatement in "nature poetry" is largely a consequence of the surprising clash with the traditions of Wordsworth and Whitman, and it is a mode bequeathed to us by Robert Frost. Most recent poetry of nature has thrown away the opportunity to exploit this legacy of our language.

JOSEPH BENNETT

John Thomas, Lady Jane and Saint-Simone[1]

IF RENISHAW IS WRAGBY, and Sir Clifford is Sir Osbert, who then is Dame Edith? Is she John Thomas, or Lady Jane? She strews herself

[1] TAKEN CARE OF, by *Edith Sitwell*. Atheneum. $5.95. FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE, by *Simone de Beauvoir*. Putnam. $10.00.

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finely with forget-me-nots, preparatory to the modish corpse-photographs which are a stylish feature of this lushly-coated Cecil Beaton bonbon. In this obscenely infantile book, her horrifying life is exposed in its most disgusting details; her witless crab-like mind crawls lumpishly about, coating with excrement all it touches. The loud, garish vaudeville of her poetry is turned on at full screech, and we are provided with a "technical" discussion of its pretentious nonsense. Dame Edith, with the malevolence of the simple-minded, focuses the barely-flickering smudge-pot of her mind on one simple formula of literary criticism: Writers who praise the Sitwells are the Greatest Writers Next to the Sitwells Themselves; but Writers who dislike the Sitwells are the Worst Writers. Thus D. H. Lawrence, F. R. Leavis, Galsworthy, Lytton Strachey, fall by the wayside. But we have Sacheverell Sitwell:

> In another of the greatest works written in our time, Sacheverell Sitwell's. . . .

And James Purdy:

> James Purdy,[2] in his great novella # *63: Dream Palace* . . . .

For the rest, there is the familiar vulgar chronicle of snobbery: scenes from the Life of a Poetess, by Cecil Beaton:

> Savonarola, whose speech . . . was . . . the forerunner of mine. . . .
>
> I had inherited the Plantagenet features of my grandmother Londesborough. . . .
>
> My face . . . had the eyes of someone who had witnessed and foretold all the tragedy of the world. Perhaps I, at four years old, knew the incipient anguish of the poet I was to become. . . .
>
> Arthur Rimbaud (in some ways my closest spiritual relation). . . .
>
> "What are you going to be when you are grown-up . . . ?" "A genius," I replied. . . .
>
> My collateral ancestor Francis Bacon. . . .
>
> I was captured by a young policeman and returned to my parents. (By that time Osbert had been born, but that warm heart that has never failed anyone could not, as he was only a few weeks old, find speech to express itself). . . .
>
> The eighteenth-century luxury of Londesborough was remarkable in its opulence. . . . For my grandmother Londesborough was one of the great hostesses of the age. . . .

[2] Mr. Purdy, writing in *Life* on Miss Sitwell's book: "the greatest literary personality of our age shows us again how lively and fearless, how entertaining and moving, how rich and incomparable she could be."

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For luncheon, in order to avoid the smell of fat in the canteen and the chatter of the admirable hard-working people there. . . .

My dear friends Jock and Betsy Whitney, then Ambassador. . . .

However, suddenly footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, and Cecil Beaton's voice penetrated the clamour (he was coming to tea with us).

Shaking the door violently, he shouted, "Oh, what *is* happening? What *Is* Happening? Open the door *at once,* Pavlik, do you hear me? Open the door!"

"For heaven's sake, Cecil," I screamed. "Stop shaking the door. He has got the key in his pocket, and if you shake the door, the lock will break, and I shall be here until Monday. And, Pavlik, stop shrieking."

How did she get away with it? How did she fool so many people so long? The posturings and the mummery, the overweening crassness of her life and writings? Literature as the playground for the rich, the frivolous, and the fatuous? Her distinguished enemies (that is to say, her hatred of anyone with a spark of intelligence, honor and integrity)?

It is true, she exploited the yearning of the talentless and the spineless to be "discovered" through the publicity and rotogravure photographs which she provided them, always to her own central advantage. But far more she exploited a saddening weakness which is one of the predominant features of the English-speaking literary world: literary men's awe at the spectacle of rich, aristocratic gods who come down from the heavens of unearned income and haughty lineage to walk among them on the muddy plains of literature. The literary man, all too often, leads a life of struggle against economic starvation; he has no social position. Wragby's coal-mines and ducal coronets (and their American equivalent) seem the impossible come to life; the tawdry, destructive, ephemeral and maliciously stupid nature of their owner disappears amid the gaudy Beaton-esque trappings.

Edith Sitwell is a descendant of Catherine Swynford and John of Gaunt who made, quite simply, a fool of herself; but more complexly, of a whole coterie of literary practitioners, many of whom were willing to be photographed with her, in spite of the fact that they were aware their picture would be reproduced in a magazine of overwhelming national distribution.

The most offensive characteristic of the latest installment of Miss de Beauvoir's interminable memoirs, *Force of Circumstance,* is its breast-beating, holier-than-thou attitude. Miss de Beauvoir is her own hagiographer; she is giving us at first hand the saintly incidents of the saintly life ("This morning was bright blue. Stayed in. Drank a cup of Nescafé . . .").

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Does she dare permit herself a small indulgence? Her lack of the smallest trace of a sense of humor coupled with her Juggernaut egotism produces such classics of unconscious comedy as the pompous discussion of her decision to own, and the practical problems concerned with learning to operate, a motor vehicle. There is comedy of this sort throughout the 658 pages; her self-obsession is so total that she cannot conceive of herself as being approached in any other manner than with awe; she has the pain and importance of the Marx Brothers' dowager throughout her pilgrimage; she will save us through grimness, incapable of a smile.

As Grand Inquisitor, she and only she, by divine right, can define orthodoxy; it is not to be found in some catechism or code of law; it is what comes into her head, or out of her mouth, at any particular moment, depending on her mood and whim. And so she burns heretics at every moment. The razor-thin line of political orthodoxy must be trod by all; woe to the transgressor. Off she sends Garry Davis to a public *auto-da-fé:* Camus, Breton, Vercors and Paulhan had defended him, but Garry, says the supreme Judgess, was only an "inspired eccentric," not a true "left-wing intellectual."

Torquemada-like she proclaims, "I am an intellectual." Precisely, this is what she is not. She is a very stupid woman with a vulgar, overweening desire to force her humorless and heavy-handed personality on others; using the excuse of political apostle-ism she foists upon us all sorts of pretentious nonsense. She is bumptious, domineering, loud-mouthed, bossy, a termagant with the intelligence of a flea, but the voice of a bullhorn. Her equivalent is the small-town dowager who bumps other women out of her path by sheer power of voice until she runs the local committees.

There are those who consider her a great intelligence and the ultimate judge before whom all heresy trials must be conducted; and there are those others, contemptible, each and every one of them Fascists. This is her disposal chute for those who challenge her in any way, or consider her stupid. The Juggernaut proceeds, grinding beneath its wheels such targets as America:

> . . . I discovered Chicago; the prisons; the police stations and the lineups, the hospitals, the stockyards, the burlesque houses, the slums with their empty lots and their nettles. I saw very few people. . . . The rest were dope addicts, gamblers, whores, thieves, ex-convicts or outlaws; they were all escapees from American conformism . . . but they were not particularly friendly.

And Jamaica:

> We flew over Jamaica. . . . Sartre, who had been there, told me there is no more baleful colony in the world.

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But,

> Card from L. in Irkutsk; he found Siberia enchanting.

And, finally, the truth about Forrestal's suicide, obtained from her own network of agents:

> One of the most ardent of the American warmongers, Forrestal, began to have such horrible visions of the Red Army flooding across the whole world and into New York, he let out such howls that they had to lock him up; he threw himself out of the sixteenth story of the hospital.

For the rest, the book is a farrago of jottings of simple-minded travelogue statistics ("Natchez, one of the oldest towns in the South, with 40,000 inhabitants") and open-faced name-dropping; Miss de Beauvoir industriously links her name with as many famous people as possible, much in the manner of Sammy Davis referring to his relations with Sinatra; she wants us to get the message; to know exactly who is speaking to us.

At times she is under the impression that *she* ("I stopped, breathless, when I had reached the liberation of Paris") created the liberation of Paris, the Algerian Resistance, the Castro revolution (and that these events have importance only from her being there). At other times she is simply spreading misinformation: "in America 50 million radiation-resistant identity discs were distributed for the purpose of identifying victims after an atomic attack." Her naïveté, in view of her conceit and arrogance, is breathtaking: "I lay down on the grass with Sandburg's *Lincoln:* I read a lot of books on American literature and history; and Fitzgerald's heartrending *The Crack-up;* and also science-fiction stories. . . ." "We were opposed to the colonialist system but we had no *a priori* prejudices. . . ." She is obsessed with concentration camps, tortures and horrors.

What we have here is the Personality manufactured by Publicity; that is, the Celebrity. Celebrity-status is all-important; once attained, it is a driving force which justifies pompous concentration on every minutia of the sacred person. Miss de Beauvoir's book could as easily have been written by Jayne Mansfield or Wallis Windsor; it could not have been written by Madame Khrushchev or Madame Sun Yat-Sen. It is the chronicle of a determined will grinding down everything in its path until it attains the ultimate sanctity that the twentieth century can give: celebrity status. Once this is attained, every vulgarity, every obtuseness is legitimized; the end comes to justify the means.

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RICHARD KOSTELANETZ

Militant Minorities

Jews and Americans, as criticism, is a bad book, practically worthless —the sort of scholarly work that finds its natural habitat buried in a bibliography. Its major failing is no different from that of Irving Malin's earlier *New American Gothic*—a critical method that disorganizes rather than coheres his materials, that directs oblique rather than penetrating lights. Instead of presenting whole portraits of an individual writer's style or achievement, he takes a body of literature, defines common characteristics, makes these characteristics his chapter headings, and then dredges up the requisite traits out of each book. To fit into the scheme, books are fragmented almost beyond recognition. As for the overarching categories, they are often not as inclusive as Malin would wish, for Jewish writers, even the seven American ones Malin chooses to treat (Karl Shapiro, Delmore Schwartz, Isaac Rosenfeld, Leslie Fiedler, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth) hardly hold the monopoly on "Exile," "Fathers and Sons," "Time," "Head and Heart," "Irony," "Fantasy," "Parable." Even worse, Malin bandies these abstractions in such an uncritical, insensitive manner that the book reads more like a reshuffling of diligently compiled note cards than something written out of the head. One inevitably gets the impression that almost any intelligent child could do as well; a machine, surely, could do better. Once more, the mechanical method of thesis-example, drummed into all of us from an early age, runs amok in inappropriate materials.

The anthology *Breakthrough* is as a work of celebration ("A Treasury") only as good as the material it selects, and this in many cases is not as fine as it could be. It's hard to discern why the editors chose just another chapter from Bellow's *Augie March* and not the brilliant story "Looking for Mister Green," which, now that the Popular Library paperback is out of print, is no longer readily available; or why they preferred the Joey Goldstein portrait from Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* to the superior (and more relevant to the anthology) "The Man Who Studied Yoga." And for reasons of personal taste, I would have favored stories by Irvin Faust, Jerome Charyn and Tillie Olsen to any included here. The larger problem in the criticism section is the restriction to essays on Jewish themes; and in the case of Norman Podhoretz, Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin and Lionel Trilling, the work selected was hardly representative of their best nor does it demonstrate how or why these critics contributed to the "breakthrough." Conspicuously absent from the criticism section is Stanley

[1] JEWS AND AMERICANS, by *Irving Malin.* Southern Illinois Univ. Press. $4.50. BREAKTHROUGH: A Treasury of Contemporary American-Jewish Literature. Edited by *Irving Malin* and *Irwin Stark.* McGraw-Hill. $7.50.

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Edgar Hyman, whose essay on David Daiches would have been particularly appropriate.

Although these two volumes are inadequate books that trivialize their subject rather than enhance it, their appearance should put the cap on current notions of the rise of the Jewish-American writer. As the anthologists put it: "For the first time in history, a large and impressively gifted group of serious American-Jewish writers has broken through the psychic barriers of the past [but weren't they really economic and social?—R. K.] to become an important, possibly a major, reformative influence in American life and letters." The notion has gained international currency; for in the poshest of London's Sunday papers this past spring, *Herzog* is hailed as a reflection of the glories of American-Jewish culture and another Sunday magazine supplement plans a feature on Jewish-American writers.

Why, one asks, do critics identify an American writer by his minority affiliation? The French don't (imagine Proust defined as the "Jewish-French" novelist!), nor do the English (although they occasionally use the less prejudiced geographical identifications such as Welsh, Northern, Dorset, etc.). The reason, I think, is that unlike these countries, America has no real cultural unity. One could say that Boston-Harvard was the closest we ever came to a cultural establishment; but its heyday was in the second half of the nineteenth century and it is significant that the last unquestionably eminent Harvard literary alumni—Eliot, Cummings, Dos Passos, Damon, Lippmann, etc.—all graduated before World War I. Nowadays, despite the claims that one group or another represents a "literary establishment," our culture is comparatively plural and mobile; and since the American writer is not part of a reigning group or Establishment, for the sake of convenience he is identified by extra-literary connections.

However, the fact of basic pluralism, either in business or intellectual life, does not prevent the possibilities of merger and collusion; and if one were to investigate the social history of the American literary scene since 1920, he would notice that numerous groups, all in effect minorities, have made claims either to represent the mainstream of American culture or its most viable current trend. What defines these groups are common social origins or adopted allegiances—Beat, Jewish, Southern, academic, Chicago, San Francisco, etc., etc.; and the social history of American literature could be interpreted as the successive ascendancy (or failure of ascendancy) of these various minority groups.

The Southern writers first dominated the scene. The movement started in Vanderbilt in the early twenties and slowly spread outward through other Southern colleges and then into the north, achieving its peak in the late forties. It had its hard core of critics and propagandists; its system of ideas formulated in an early work (*I'll Take My Stand*) and extended in later writing; a practice of measuring

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writers against an established ideology with a preference for literary values that stemmed from or related to the ideology; its hierarchy of reputations, both critical and creative; its network of magazines sympathetic to each other, with overlapping lists of editors, contributing editors, contributors, reviewers—magazines in which the master critics were frequently quoted, both in the essays and the ads; its attempts to make writers of similar background into the masters and prophets of the age; its reinterpretation of the intellectual and literary tradition to emphasize appropriate predecessors for their present idols; its connections in publishing which culminated in textbooks propagating the ideology and taste to the young.

As the movement succeeded, the critics became established as professors at the most eminent American universities, all in the heart of the northern enemy's territory; the textbooks became best sellers; the most-touted writer got the Nobel Prize; former students of the seniors won lesser prizes, etc., etc. The ascendancy of the movement was capped by the appearance of anthologies like *A Southern Harvest* and critical books about the Southern writers, uncritically tossing off terms like "Renaissance" (hardly appropriate for a movement that produced, as far as the outside world was concerned, only *one* truly great author), recording anecdotes about the masters and their off-hand comments about trival things, and still puffing the reputations of minor writers who embodied values, attitudes and birthplaces similar to the major talents in the hierarchy. Of course, history was never as neat as the historian can make it appear; and what resembles, in retrospect, a systematic invasion may have been, in fact, the result of little more than semi-conscious common sympathies and the fortuitous accident of a concentration of talent in one place. Few, however, would still innocently proclaim that everything in the emergence of the Southern literati was pure chance.

The sceptical social historian should have no trouble identifying precisely the same pattern duplicated some fifteen years later by another minority, American-Jewish writers. Again, there were the core of critics and propagandists; the common ideology of Marxian liberalism which branched off into two streams of democratic socialism and neo-liberalism; the inclination to test writers against these dominant beliefs; a system of literary values which discounted form and experiment and emphasized theme and intelligent, precise rendering of social experience; a phalanx of magazines ranging from a quarterly through a monthly down to an occasional weekly (with a slew of ambitious young men willing to do tasks for which the elders no longer had time); a hierarchy of reputations, almost synonymous with a critic's or writer's apparent ability to win favor in the world at large; universities to which the group gravitated, often to jump from them into the major institutions; an attempt to make one of their number into the greatest writer of his time (in England, christened "The-Saul-Bellow-shall-be-our-Greatest-Writer-or-bust movement")

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which has so far conquered one international prize and has another to go; and the inevitable connections in publishing and the media. What at first may have deceived people was how vehemently this group disclaimed any alliance with religious Judaism; but they were still what Arthur A. Cohen defines as Jews "out of loyalty to the Jewish state or Jewish people"—i.e. secular Jews. Just as the Southerners claimed universal, or at least national, relevance for their program, so did the Jewish critics. They, too, set out *en masse* to rework the intellectual tradition, a change described by Leslie Fiedler as a *fait accompli:*

> Through their Jewish writers, Americans, after the Second World War, were able to establish a new kind of link with Europe in place of the old paleface connection—a link not with the Europe of decaying castles and the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor with that of the French *symbolistes* and the deadly polite *Action Française*—for these are all Christian Europes; but with the post-Christian Europe of Marx and Freud, which is to say, of secularized Judaism, as well as the Europe of surrealism and existentialism, Kafka, neo-Chassidism . . .

Only on the textbook front did the Jewish literary critics seemingly fail to engineer this sociological revolution, but the pioneering quality paperback line, Anchor Books, revived many of their earlier, often neglected works; and quality paperbacks, especially in literature courses, are slowly replacing the textbooks. This Jewish group is dominant at the moment and the appearance of the books under review is among the conclusive signs of its ascendancy.

Both the Southerners and the Jews, then, capitalized upon our lack of cultural continuity to invade the scene from a minority position. In the intellectual free-market which is American culture, where the loudest and most insistent voice so often wins, both groups developed the capitalist techniques of production, division of labor, product differentiation, organization, distribution, advertising, merging, interlocking directorates and selling. Each group, too, has had its mavericks who emancipated themselves from the clan and drew individual followings sufficient to warrant their public ex-communication; and as Robert Penn Warren did with Thomas Wolfe, so more recently has Philip Rahv exiled Leslie Fiedler. More important, both Southerners and Jews rebutted the popular stereotype of their cultural sterility. The Southerners felt obligated to dispel H. L. Mencken's much-popularized image of Southern decadence; the Jewish writer fought against the anti-Semitic stereotypes so fashionable in the literature of 1920-1940 in which, Fiedler notes:

> The Jew [either] stands for the pseudo-artist; [or] as merchant-tourist and usurious millionaire, he desires now to appropriate what he never made, to buy and squat in the monuments of high Christian culture, fouling them by his mere presence.

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It was a powerful two-fold image, one that obsessed the Jewish writer coming of age during this period; against it he measured himself, as he also denied his traditional religion.

Nowadays, whereas the southern movement is an anachronism, the Jewish-American push continues unabated, encountering surprisingly little protest, often distorting standards of literary value and fair argument (as in the attacks on Hannah Arendt) by its double insistence on group innocence and importance. Perhaps nowhere else does it reflect its excesses more strongly than in the inflation, invariably by Jewish critics, of minor reputations. It is as though the Jewish critic recognized that the ultimate success of the movement was not the world-wide recognition of one man but what Irving Howe, speaking of Yiddish literature, once called, "The only subject truly worthy of a serious writer . . . the problem of collective destiny, the fate of a people." Several magazines almost lie in wait to hail the arrival of another promising Jewish talent; certain respected figures seem almost indiscriminate in distributing blurbs; one of the most conspicuous examples was the unbounded praise that greeted Philip Roth's first book (not at all bad by any means; but just not that good), for here was a young man like his elders, critical of the Jewish middle-class and yet still Jewish. In addition, it would not be unfair to say that certain critics, such as Theodore Solotaroff, have built a respectable reputation solely upon intelligent essays about Jewish experiences and/or Jewish authors. From time to time, one comes across embarrassing, almost desperate puffs, invariably by Jewish critics, of writers as various as Bernard Malamud, Harvey Swados, the late Isaac Rosenfeld (posthumously deified totally out of proportion to apparent talent or achievement), Diana Trilling, Lionel Abel and Irving Howe; and the publication of the late Robert Warshow's collected essays, *The Immediate Experience,* was supposedly delayed so that Lionel Trilling could certify that, yes, Warshow (the author of only a handful of significant essays) was among the best minds of his generation.

Other signs of distortion include numerous confessions by patently gentile writers of part-Jewishness (Robert Lowell, Mary McCarthy), as though the ounce or two of blood really mattered; and the installation as chief Negro intellectual-and-spokesman of James Baldwin, whose essays on Jews long ago differentiated between the idealists and the businessmen, and who was first discovered by largely Jewish magazines probably because, one could suggest, he cast his "alienation" in Jewish terms (by discounting the blues tradition) and has lived his adult life more among Jews than Negroes (as Ralph Ellison has not).

The legend of Jewish greatness makes the most unlikely and uncritical of converts, producing gentile critics who are as embarrassingly ignorant of the realities of Jewish culture as Jewish critics have been of the Negro. A long review of *Herzog* in *Encounter,* by a

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Cambridge (one assumes gentile) don, Tony Tanner, suggests that Bellow's intellectually rich style has its origins in Yiddish; in fact, Yiddish is decidedly anti-philosophic, full of words designed to cope with the dirt (*dreck*) of existence.

Often, too, this semitic preference masks itself behind seemingly objective criticism. A scorecard reading of Norman Podhoretz's collection of essays, *Doings and Undoings,* finds the following major decisions: sharp praise for Saul Bellow (as our greatest contemporary), Joseph Heller, Paul Goodman, Nathanael West, Bernard Malamud, Isaac Rosenfeld, Herman Kahn, Norman Mailer, James Baldwin and Edmund Wilson (who is philo-Semitic); equally blunt dumps of Mary McCarthy, John Updike, Dwight Macdonald, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John O'Hara, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg (an exception!), William Burroughs and Hannah Arendt (whose crime is being too critical of Jews). Rarely has the world of modern literature and thought been so neatly divided.

To explain this phenomenon of Jewish emergence, the Jewish critic points to symbols of gentile admiration—often unconscious—of essentially Jewish culture, ranging from Jules Feiffer and sick jokes to Mogen David wine and Herman Wouk, Natalie Wood and Eddie Fisher; and the reasons offered by Leslie Fiedler in *Waiting for the End*—in brief, guilt and sympathetic alienation—are about as good as any I've seen. While this is not to be discounted, one should not minimize, as Fiedler does, the Jewish movement into communications and education. First, so many of the media, especially the movies, are owned and run by Jews. Secondly, there is good reason to believe, as Arthur Wang suggests, that a majority of the book buying public today, particularly of hardbacks, is Jewish; and this, rather than the gentiles' philo-Semitism, may better explain the preponderance of Jewish authors and subjects on the best-seller lists. Thirdly, to my mind most important, now that the Jews are economically comfortable in America, they are turning to what has always been a major, but sometimes neglected, dimension of the Jewish tradition: the acquisition and dissemination of culture and, further, the creation of it. A glance at the list of winners of any freely administered national graduate fellowship reveals a proliferation of Jewish names. Although only three to four percent of America is Jewish, I would estimate that 40 percent of the Fulbright scholars in England this year were Jews and if the selection were not geographically distributed, the percentage surely would have been higher. The mammoth roster of Woodrow Wilson Fellows discloses only a slightly smaller percentage. There is, in short, among American Jews a drive towards education; which is surely nothing but admirable. Nonetheless, as the importance of a certain "Wasp" background was once inflated beyond its true importance, so nowadays Jewish ancestry, I fear, may have acquired more intellectual prestige than it really merits.

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Perhaps this success will end Jewish group-aggrandizement. Exclusion was surely evil; and whereas self-inflation was once perhaps a should hope—it may be just wishful thinking—that the younger Jewnecessary minority strategy, it is now merely unnecessary and bad. I ish intellectuals will avoid this pattern. If so many of the older generation came from slum backgrounds and were, as poor boys, very much concerned with "making it," sometimes confusing literary value with personal and group success, the members of the younger generation invariably come from the suburbs and are thus the children of parents who have already secured social and economic success in America; and, especially if they were born after 1940, the young have never encountered any seriously debilitating discrimination here. These younger intellectuals realize that following their literary inclinations lowers their station in life—they will earn less than their parents did, spend most of their lives in shabbier neighborhoods and houses, probably be less respected by the community. They become writers or teachers largely because they would rather write or teach than anything else; and they have no reason to look upon the intellectual life as a stepping-stone to assimilation or social success. Although they have hardly forsaken the critical tradition, they are a less aggressively competitive, a less inclined to sneer and "put down," a less intolerant group.

What they believe, again in contrast to their elders, is that social origin is not really very important. They marry gentiles and still remain Jews; and there is much truth in Mordecai Richler's statement that assimilated Jews "seem to me to be doing the most to perpetuate living Jewish culture. They also appear to be wholeheartedly, *happily* Jewish, without being aggressive about it." These young intellectuals recognize that our best writers and critics—the ones most worth admiring and emulating—have either remained aloof or straddled minority movements, and they believe that what an artist or writer achieves is nine-tenths the result of his own imaginative efforts. These are all hopeful signs, but hardly all-pervasive ones as yet.

Now that the Jewish literary movement has "made it," some suspect that the Negroes will be the next minority group to push themselves upon the cultural scene. I think not, for various reasons. For one, many of the Negro's cultural aspirations were tied to the Jewish rise, and the acceptance of the Jews brought with it, at least in respectable northern circles, the acceptance of the talented Negro.

No, the next minority group will be the homosexuals, this time coming to the fore unashamedly as such. Whereas the homosexual writer up to now has always suppressed his homosexuality or hidden it behind another kind of programme, in the future we should expect to find it more and more flaunted as a minority affiliation and claims made for it as a minority sensibility. I would surmise that in twenty years that same reviewer (or his son) in the poshest of London papers will describe a new novel as reflecting "the glories of American homosexual culture."

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